



## Paracolonialism: A Case of Post-1988 Anglophone Pakistani Fiction

Ali Usleem Saleem

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**PARACOLONIALISM: A CASE OF POST-1988  
ANGLOPHONE PAKISTANI FICTION**

By

ALI USMAN SALEEM

March 2015

**UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire in partial fulfilment of the  
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ABSTRACT

Embedded in the socio-political milieu of the country Anglophone Pakistani fiction provides a critical perspective on some of the important contemporary issues facing the country like feminism, class struggle, misuse of religious discourse, sectarianism, terrorism and the fragmentation of the Pakistani society. By contextualizing the works of four Pakistani fiction writers, Sara Suleri, Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif, in the theoretical paradigms of modernism, postmodernism and postcolonialism, this research identifies salient facets and characteristics of Pakistani Anglophone fiction produced during the last three decades.

This thesis argues that Pakistani Anglophone fiction is Janus-faced in nature. On the one hand it specifically deconstructs various indigenous issues which are destabilizing Pakistani society and politics, while on the other hand it challenges the discursive construction of Pakistan as a terrorist country through international discourse. By doing so, these writers not only adopt the role of political commentators and interveners but also create a counter-narrative to Western hegemonic discourse and represent a case for a liberal and democratic Pakistan.

Moreover the textual analysis of this fiction indicates a shift from traditional postcolonial literature. Instead of contextualizing their work in the colonial experience of the British Raj or its aftermath, these writers dissociate themselves from it and use this dissociation as a narrative strategy to hold the political and military leadership accountable for the socio-political chaos in Pakistan. The thesis argues that this characteristic of Anglophone Pakistani fiction indicates the emergence of a new phase, 'Paracolonialism' or 'Paracolonial fiction' which rejects the influence of colonialism on the socio-economic and political crisis of Third

World countries and deconstructs various factors which led to their post-independence unstable economy and social fragmentation.

Dedicated to Ammara and Rayan

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of PhD at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate: Ali UsmanSaleem

Signature:

Date: 26-03-2015

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## **Chapter 1: Paracolonialism: An Intersection of Politics, Religion and Post-1988 Anglophone Pakistani Fiction**

Pakistan as a state has struggled to maintain its political control in its northern tribal areas, to cope with terrorist and armed militias run by Taliban and other religio-political groups, religious extremism, sectarian killings and to prevent social and cultural degeneration during the last few decades. Since its independence in 1947 from the British colonial rule Pakistan has seen three periods of martial law, has fought two major wars (1965 and 1971) with its neighbouring country India and has participated in another as a USA ally against Russia when it invaded Afghanistan (1979 – 1989). Such an unstable political culture has resulted in a fragmented and radicalized society and has given rise to a series of social and cultural crisis. In the discourse about war on terror, Pakistan features prominently. Pakistan's involvement in 9/11 and the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 being the main focus as the Western, particularly US media and film, discourse constructs Pakistan as a nation of religious extremists who are devoid of any progressive social and political agenda. Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers have responded to this chaos through their narratives and have tried to explore and analyze various facets of this Western discourse.

I argue through this research that the Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers writing in and after the 1990s show a remarkable shift in terms of both the content and the writing strategies they employ compared to their predecessors. These authors have taken up specific social and political issues through their writings and provide a trenchant commentary on matters of indigenous and international significance. Their fiction offers a rational perspective on various socio-political and cultural factors contributing to the social decay and is, ultimately, an intervention in Western discourse about Pakistan and its people. In this thesis four Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers - Sara Suleri, Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif – have been selected to provide in-depth studies of this shift. These Pakistani writers’ narratives furnish accounts of the social evolution, political upheavals and economic crisis in Pakistan and my research situates their work within the context of the clash of Western and Islamic discourse on the ‘War on Terror’. I argue that on the one hand they focus on the indigenous crisis threatening Pakistan’s political and social stability and through recurrent themes in their writings draw readers’ attention to the misuse of religion and manipulation of religious discourse, corruption in the political and military elite, fraudulent moral and financial activity and subdued and the suppression of marginalized minorities. On the other hand, I suggest that their writings show the more complex argument for Pakistan as an enlightened and progressive society pursuing development, yet caught in the mire of terrorism, and, hence suffering. By doing this, these writers are challenging the hegemonic Western discourse which portrays Pakistan as intolerant and blames the country for

supporting and aiding the Taliban and other terrorist and extremist religious organizations.

These Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers also deconstruct the various factors contributing in the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan. Therefore it becomes very important to analyze their fiction and study these writers' viewpoints about the issues threatening the solidarity and stability of today's world. In such moments of geo-political crisis these Pakistani fiction writers have taken up the role of political commentators and have tried to deconstruct the dominant discourse, providing alternate interpretations and challenging various cultural and discursive preconceptions about Pakistan and the Pakistanis. By using the literary culture of the former colonial power, contemporary Postcolonial Pakistani literature explores and deconstructs its national history to find reasons for the current socio-political and economic crisis. Furthermore, I argue that it is pertinent to see how these writers reflect and question the issues of national and political significance and how their writings imagine developing a national identity for their people by intervening in the more powerful and hegemonic Western discourse.

By contextualizing the work of Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers in their country's internal socio-political ruptures, I also explore and define salient characteristics of Postcolonial Pakistani fiction produced after 1988. This follows on from research by Tariq Rehman's in *A History of Pakistani Literature in English*(1991) and Cara N. Cilano's work exemplified in *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State* (2013) and *Post-9/11 Espionage Fiction in the*

*US and Pakistan: Spies and "Terrorists"* (2014). My research in post-1988 Anglophone Pakistani fiction indicates a shift from the traditional postcolonial writing. I argue that Pakistani writers, instead of falling back on the colonial past have tended to ignore the legacy and aftermath of colonial rule when describing the crisis faced by today's Pakistan. Their particular focus is the post-independence era as they explore various political and military regimes in Pakistan and expose the failure of both the political and military rulers in handling the affairs of the country. I argue that their strategy of ignoring the colonial inheritance in their writings is conscious and deliberate. They believe that in order to deconstruct the social and religious fragmentation, current wave of religious extremism and the popularity of a religious fundamentalist narrative in Pakistan, they need to contextualize it in the present socio-political milieu of their country. Hence they tend to dissect the current dismal and frail situation of their country by situating their narratives in a post-independence Pakistan instead of trying to locate the roots for these problems in the colonial era. I describe this phenomenon as 'Paracolonialism' and argue that the term 'Paracolonialism' or 'Paracolonial fiction' defines this essentially antithetical shift which is an action and reaction to Independence and the postcolonial narrative. This shift or divergence in postcolonial theory is not the overreaching unification of 'trans'-colonialism rather 'para'-colonialism as the Oxford English Dictionary defines that the prefix para is 'beyond or distinct from but analogous to' its object, (OED). In defining Paracolonialism, J. H. Miller's explanation of the 'para' is useful:

[It is] an uncanny double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something at once inside a domestic

economy and outside it, something simultaneously this side of the boundary line, threshold, or margin, and at the same time beyond it, equivalent in status.

(Miller, 2008, p. 404)

Miller's description aptly highlights a certain parallelism embedded in the term. Even though these Pakistani writers are trying to detach their writings from colonialism and its aftermath for their country, the colonial baggage remains with them in one form or another. Their choice of English language, the language of their ex-colonial masters, for writing their novels is one such example. The term 'Anglophone' used in the title is also indicative of this baggage. Even though writing in English is narrative strategy and a conscious choice, it relegates these Pakistani writers the status of belonging to a once colonized nation. I argue that they have consciously targeted an English speaking international readership by opting to write in English. English enjoys a global hegemony over other languages and is vastly read and understood throughout the world. Pakistani writers' choice of language enables them to involve the Western reader in a dialogue with the Muslim world of Pakistan.

The choice of writing in English also becomes a debatable issue for a writer with a colonial legacy looming in the past. There is a divided opinion among the postcolonial critics in terms of writing in English by a writer coming from a once colonized nation. Writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o<sup>1</sup> see it as an extension of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ngugi started writing in English but later switched to his native language Gikuyu. For him by writing in English a writer conforms to the hegemony of the language of the Empire. He asserts that, 'African literature can only be written in the African languages, that is, the languages of the African peasantry and working class' (Ngugi, 1986, p. 163). Achebe, on the other hand, argues that he chose English to, 'communicate, to tell a story. You do not tell a story to your ethnic group alone. There is a larger Africa beyond this world' (Achebe, 2005, public lecture).

colonial legacy and emphasize to write in native languages as a decolonization strategy. Others, like Achebe and many Indian and Pakistani Anglophone writers, find writing in English as a tool to tell their narrative in a language that can access a broader readership, beyond the national borders. For them it is an opportunity to initiate a dialogic process between them and their ex-masters and to tell the rest of the world of the destructive forces of colonialism and imperialism. Their counter argument is to indigenize English, a way to make the language of the colonizer their own and then mould it according to their own needs and agenda. Many postcolonial writers tend to appropriate the colonial language through various textual and linguistic strategies like neologism, use of un-translated words from their native language and code switching etc. Pramod K. Nayar (2008) recognizes this phenomenon of appropriation of English language and remarks:

[...] there is evidently no 'standard' English being used by postcolonial writers. English has been multiplied, fragmented, hybridized, bowdlerized, and indigenized by authors and cultures across the former colonies. We now have, as a result, many Englishes.

(Nayar, 2008, p. 251)

Writing in English not only allows postcolonial writers to challenge the West's misconceptions about their lands but also to counter the discursive authenticity of various cultural and social presumptions about the non-West Third World countries. By writing about their own communities in English these Third World writers, as Bapsi Sidhwa believes, are 'turning faceless people and stereotypes into individual with faces' (Jussawala and Dasenbrock, 1992, p. 220).



Huggan (2001), on the other hand, considers the popularity of the Third World fiction being written in English as an extension of postcolonial literature's neo-imperialist implications. He argues that, 'Postcoloniality, put another way, is a value-regulating mechanism within the global late capital system of commodity exchange [...] in which even the language of resistance can be manipulated and consumed' (Huggan, 2001, p. 6). Rushdie, while highlighting the importance of Indian writers' choice and decision of using English as the language for their fiction, argues:

English is the most powerful medium of communication in the world; should we not then rejoice at these artists' mastery of it, and at their growing influence? [...] One important dimension of literature is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world.

(Rushdie and West, 1997, pp. xxi-xxii)

Postcolonial literature and theory, as an oppositional intellectual discourse, is rewarded in the contemporary metropolitan. But Huggan (2001) believes that this discourse is 'subservient to global capitalist economy [...] by which generalized cultural differences are manufactured, disseminated and consumed' (Huggan, 2001, pp. 9-10). The Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers', particularly Hamid and Shamsie, articles have recurrently appeared in the British and US newspapers. Huggan further argues that, 'Postcoloniality [...] is a value-regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange. Value is constructed through global market operations involving the exchange of cultural commodities and, particularly, culturally 'othered' goods' (Huggan, 2001, p. 6). Pakistani fiction writers' peripheral and marginalized status has provided them with a distinct position

in a post-9/11 world which is being manipulated by the capitalist economy by providing them more space in the Western print and electronic media.

Pakistani fiction writers, I argue, are more sophisticated and manipulative in their use of English as a language for writing their fiction which is beyond a traditional understanding of postcolonial appropriation and indigenization. They do not contest with the idea of English being an alien language and hence do not feel the need to indigenize it. Due to their vast exposure with the Western life and English language, they find themselves more comfortable while writing in English than in Urdu, their native and national language. Furthermore, as these Pakistani Anglophone fiction writers write with a definite agenda to address the international readers, they have also found it quite resourceful to write in English. My assertion is that Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers, by exploiting the colonial baggage of English language, are furnishing the rest of the world with a culturally mediated view of Pakistan and the Pakistani people. As it is almost impossible for them to completely let go of their colonial baggage, hence, I believe that the term 'Paracolonialism' defines the phenomenon of consciously adopting this baggage. Furthermore, through this narrative strategy, the Pakistani writers are able to appropriate, and through innovative stylistic techniques re-appropriate, the English language, to look at their country's past from their own perspective.

It also becomes imperative to discuss and define each author's status as a 'Pakistani' writer as 'Pakistani English fiction writer' in itself is a problematic term and it is very hard to categorize some of the writers as Pakistani. Writers like

Shamsie, Hanif and Hamid though continually write about Pakistan in their novels but their lives have been so divided between the West and Pakistan and it again becomes problematic to call them Pakistani writers. Sara Suleri (b. 1953), Kamila Shamsie (b. 1973), Mohsin Hamid (b. 1971) and Mohammed Hanif (b. 1964) were all born in Pakistan but have spent most of their lives in UK and USA, either for their studies or opting to live in a self-willed exile. But importantly in spite of their lives divided between the West and Pakistan, they have had a good exposure to various social and political changes in Pakistan. All these four writers have witnessed the religious radicalization of the Pakistani society and have explored its various facets through their writings. Suleri after witnessing her country and people being manipulated through a religious and political discourse went to USA and lived there for the rest of her life in a self-willed exile. Hanif, on the other hand, served in the Pakistan Air Force, went to UK for higher studies and started his journalistic career with BBC. Hamid, after living in UK and USA for many years, is now settled in Pakistan. He studied creative writing at University of Princeton in USA where he was taught by luminaries like Toni Morrison and Joyce Carol Oates. Morrison even oversaw the first draft of *Moth Smoke*, Hamid's first novel. Hamid is also a regular contributor of journalistic pieces in one of the prominent Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* and in British and US newspapers like *the Guardian* and *the New York Times*. Shamsie has also divided her life between USA, UK and Pakistan and is settled in UK at the moment. Shamsie is the daughter of a known literary critic Muneeza Shamsie and one of her great aunts Attia Hussain was a known writer, feminist and a

BBC broadcaster. Even though they demand to be known and recognized as 'Pakistani' writers, their divided lives puts the authenticity of their narrative about Pakistan into question and, I believe that their divided lives provide them with a vantage point for having lived in the West and hence they can write about the competing narratives of the West and Islam with an analytical retrospective gaze. Having been exposed to Western discourse they can respond with much authority to the discursively constructed cultural and political preconceptions about the people and the land they belong to. More importantly their accounts of a pre- and post-9/11 West and Pakistan become even more significant when we try to analyze this hideous moment of human history. They have lived in a pre- and post-9/11 West and have experienced the changes that the US and Pakistani societies underwent as a result of this drastic incident.

The Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers and their work have been read and discussed widely during the last decade, especially after 9/11. A dearth of available critical work in this regard makes it pertinent to carry out a research project that maps the salient features of this distinct body of fiction. I argue that 9/11 has a huge role in putting them on the world's literary map. Their opinions and understanding of a pre- and post-9/11 world is important not only for the West but also for the rest of the world. This fiction furnishes the world with a voice coming from a country which is not only badly affected by a strong wave of religious extremism and many suicide attacks on its civilian population and law enforcement agency personnel but is also considered a safe haven for Al-Qaida and Taliban terrorists. At the same time

sharing a long border with Afghanistan and being an ally of USA in War on Terror, Pakistan became an important geo-political asset for the West. Hence my argument that the viewpoint of the literary intelligentsia – and these authors in particular – is significant in highlighting and understanding various facets of Pakistani society, its reaction to War on Terror, a post-9/11 Pakistan and West's role in it.

After the 1980s many new Pakistani writers chose English as their preferred language for publication. India, Pakistan's neighbouring and sister country, has a strong tradition of fiction writing in the English language and many Anglo-Indian writers are known and acknowledged worldwide. Moreover the research work carried out within and outside India is huge, defining various dimensions, structural and thematic, of Anglo-Indian fiction.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there is only one classic reference text, Tariq Rehman's *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* (1991) that provides an overview of the Anglophone Pakistani literature. There is a research need for detailed study and examination of the Anglophone Pakistani fiction.

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<sup>2</sup> The term Anglo-Indian fiction refers to the fiction produced by the writers of Indian origin, either in India or belonging to the Indian Diaspora community across the world, in English language. The term highlights the fact that these writers though writing in English, are not doing so through a natural choice. With its roots in nineteenth century, the Anglo-Indian fiction represents one of the most innovative fields of literature written in English. Names like BankimchandraChatterji, Rabindranath Tagore (India's only Nobel Prize winner for literature), Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, V. S. Naipaul and Arundhati Roy are some of the internationally recognized English fiction writers. Various reasons for the popularity of the Indian fiction in English, including globalization, imperial nostalgia, Indian writings considered as exotic and institutionalization of English as a unifying medium for the general populace in India have contributed in the rise and popularity of Anglo-Indian fiction worldwide. Ahmed (1992, p. 7) further argues that labels like Anglo-Indian necessarily carry an ideological weight with them. For further details see Peppin, B. (2012) *Black and White: The "Anglo-Indian" Identity in Recent English Fiction*. Central Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse UK Ltd. Johnson, A. (2011) *Out of Bounds: Anglo-Indian Literature and Geography of Displacement (Writing Past Colonialism)*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press. Suleri, S. (1992) *The Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This thesis goes towards this end. It is focused on the in-depth study of a few key writers. The selection of authors depended on several factors. The period chosen was determined by a remarkable increase in fiction writing in English language in Pakistan in the 1990s. Kamila Shamsie and Mohsin Hamid were two such authors who started writing around this time and gained an international fame as Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers. Before 1990, there were fewer Pakistani writers writing fiction in English and authors such as Ahmed Ali, Bapsi Sidhwa and Zulfikar Ghose were mainly concerned with either the Partition of the Indo-Pak subcontinent or the post-independence trauma for their nation. To examine the elements of paracolonial writing I selected authors who were concerned with contemporary or post-partition Pakistan. This excluded Ali, Sidhwa and Ghose – and also Hanif Qureshi who he is based in the UK and whose work is largely concerned with the issues of the Pakistani diaspora community. Similarly Tariq Ali, well known for his Marxist views and political writings about Pakistan was excluded from the study as I was more interested in the writers who were either based in Pakistan or, if expatriates were writing about the socio-political turmoil in Pakistan since 1988.

In selecting Sara Suleri, I wanted to focus on how a Pakistani fiction writer represents the history of the political turmoil and instability in Pakistan placing it decisively on General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law regime. General Zia's rule saw the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan, as the state empowered and funded various religious and religio-political parties and used them as a recruitment base for preparing mujahedeen to counter the Russian invasion in Afghanistan.

Contextualizing today's terrorism-riddled Pakistan in General Zia's military rule and his policies, Sara Suleri became the ideal choice and I start my thesis with her memoir *Meatless Days* (1989). *Meatless Days* discusses almost four decades of social and political history of the country including independence, post-independence issues, separation of the eastern wing of Pakistan, the controversial death sentence and hanging of the then prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, General Zia's military rule, rise of religio-political parties and an extremist religious discourse in Pakistan during the 1980s. Suleri's memoir provides a necessary context and an important background for a discussion on the works of other novelists to follow.

Furthermore, Suleri had a good exposure to the religio-political manoeuvring of the Pakistani society as her father, Mr Zia-ud-Din Ahmed Suleri (Z. A. Suleri), was a known Pakistani journalist and an aide of General Zia. She has witnessed many of the social and political upheavals that Pakistan has faced. Mr. Suleri, a well-known Pakistani journalist, has a reputation of being an aide of all the military dictators in the political history of Pakistan. Suleri, on the other hand, had been very vocal in expressing her displeasure about these military rulers and the problems that followed them. *Meatless Days* foregrounds various social and cultural facets of Pakistani society such as religious festivals and rituals, religious personalities, national holidays and their symbolic significance, eating habits in Pakistan and issues of language. Suleri incorporates all these facets within the larger political context and problematizes them by intermingling the cultural and the political. Her

work raises some very serious questions about the socio-political structures of Pakistan.

Kamila Shamsie, the second Pakistani fiction writer selected for this research, comes from a family which is known for its contributions to the literary scene of Pakistan. Her grandmother, Begum Jahanara Habibullah, was a writer and her aunt Attia Hosain was a Pakistani feminist and a BBC broadcaster. Shamsie's mother, Muneeza Shamsie, is a UK-based literary journalist and editor. Shamsie did her BA in creative writing and Masters in Fine Arts in USA and since 2007 has been based in UK. Her first novel, *In The City by the Sea*, appeared in 1998. Since then she has written five more novels including *Salt and Saffron* (2000), *Kartography* (2002), *Broken Verses* (2005), *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and *A God in Every Stone* (2014). She is also a regular contributor of political pieces in the British newspaper *The Guardian*. Through her non-fictional political writings she regularly voices her concerns about women rights in Pakistani patriarchal society, the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan, terrorism, Taliban and the plight of the Pakistani nation struggling to cope with religious fundamentalism. Recently she has also written in support of Malala Yousufzai<sup>3</sup> and has condemned Taliban for shooting her in the head as she spoke in favour of education of young girls in her hometown, Swat.

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<sup>3</sup>Malala Yousafzai, a fourteen year student, is a female education activist in the once Taliban occupied and ruled Pakistani Town Mingora, in the district of Swat. She wrote a blog for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), under the pseudonym GulMakai (Urdu translation for corn flower), to keep her true identity a secret from the militants. Her blog gave the details of her fear stricken and disturbed life in Mingora under the Taliban rule and her views advocating the right of education for the girls of her area. She was nominated for an International Children's Peace Prize, awarded National Youth Peace Prize by the Government of Pakistan, made several appearances on the Pakistani media and appeared in a documentary made by the New York Times. She was shot by the Taliban in Swat



The novel, written by Shamsie, that I have analyzed for this research is *Burnt Shadows* (2009). Shamsie's work is an apt example of my idea of paracolonial fiction. The novel explores four very different periods from the twentieth century history. It starts in Hiroshima in Japan, moves to pre-Partition India, then to Pakistan in the 1980s describing the rise of religious extremist discourse and the empowerment of religio-political parties during the military rule of General Zia and finally ends in a post-9/11 USA. It is interesting to note that one complete section in *Burnt Shadows* represents the pre-partition colonial India and the lives of the British and the Indians but Shamsie does not use this colonial era as a cause of any chaos in post-independence Pakistan. On the contrary she ignores any references to the colonial history of the country while highlighting the rise of Islamization during General Zia's military regime and later while deconstructing a post-9/11 Pakistan. Instead of falling back on the grand narrative of history, she is keen to understand today's Pakistan through the micro-narratives of individual characters' stories. Following postmodernism, paracolonialism also favours the local rather than universal forms of truth which Shamsie uses to create a new space where hitherto marginalized communities could be given a voice.

Through a fictional representation and reconstruction of some of the most important events during the last seven decades, Shamsie advocates the need for a transnational culture where people with different religious beliefs and socio-cultural affiliations can co-exist without causing pain and destruction for others. She also

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on 9 October 2012 for openly speaking against their policies and criticizing them for destroying and shutting down schools for girls. Luckily, she survived and is currently living in the UK.

tries to find a common thread among some of the most atrocious acts of state violence that one nation carried out on another and claimed it to be legitimate. She holds capitalist policies and strategies of the financially stronger nations responsible for this chaos and believes that these nations' desire to prolong and maintain their financial, political and military supremacy over the weaker ones has led to the political instability of the Third World countries.

*Burnt Shadows* (2009) also provides an insight into the functioning and the structures of Pakistani society. The space and role of women in Pakistan is a recurrent theme in her narrative. Both Suleri and Shamsie argue through their fiction that the Pakistani society has failed to accommodate various marginalized communities, especially women, in the larger socio-political strata of the country. Both of them believe that women have been deprived of their due status and have been denied any progressive role and outlook. They argue that women in Pakistan are best represented through absence and are only known through their biological roles and household duties and are defined through their body. A strong and forceful feminist discourse is embedded in these novels and presents a case for the Pakistani women by representing their suppressed and marginalized status. I argue that Derrida's concept of catachresis is relevant and important in understanding Suleri and Shamsie's ideas regarding women's existence in Pakistan. A detailed discussion of Suleri and Shamsie's depiction of the status of women is carried out in the analysis chapters on *Meatless Days* (1989) and *Burnt Shadows* (2009). Even though

these writers are not reformists in their writings, I believe that their texts are very important in understanding many underlying currents of Pakistani society.

Mohsin Hamid is the first male Pakistani fiction writer whose work I analyze for this research. His inaugural novel *Moth Smoke* (2001) explores the issues like class disparity, unjustified access and distribution of resources and dissatisfaction with the decaying and degenerating socio-economic milieu of the country. *Moth Smoke* foregrounds an economy in crisis and rising religious extremism in Pakistan and goes on to highlight an ongoing conflict between the lower and the upper class of Pakistan due to economic and social injustices in the society. Hamid's second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) focuses on the crisis that Pakistan is facing on the international level. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a continuation of *Moth Smoke* in a sense that issues, like religious extremism, that Hamid had raised in his first novel are now haunting the country. The novel deconstructs a pre and post-9/11 US in the context of a probable transformation of a young, progressive and a liberal Muslim into a religious extremist. The novel further goes on to challenge and negotiate the stereotypical representation of Pakistan and the Pakistani nation as terrorists and religious extremists through Western discourse. Hamid is the most obvious of all the writers, selected for this research, in employing paracolonialism as a narrative strategy by focusing on the current situation of Pakistan while completely ignoring the colonial era. Both his novels, *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, keep oscillating between the pre-colonial and post-independence time. I argue that he wants his readers to realize that he is consciously ignoring the

colonial era while constructing his narratives and wants to locate the reasons for the current crisis in Pakistan by deconstructing today's socio-political milieu. Hence, Hamid becomes a rational choice for this research as his novels not only deconstruct various indigenous issues faced by the Pakistani society but also intervene into the post-9/11 Western discourse.

The last Pakistani fiction writer whose work I have analyzed for this research is Mohammad Hanif. His fiction investigates power structures in the Pakistani society, gives voice to the suppressed and the marginalized communities and deconstructs the larger socio-political milieu. Like Shamsie and Hamid, Hanif also seems disinterested in Pakistan's colonial history and its aftermath. As a paracolonial writer, his focus is to give voice to the marginalized and suppressed communities, explore the dark spaces in the national history and to challenge the hegemonic social, political and religious discourses in Pakistan. His first novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) incorporates details about Pakistan in the 1980s under the martial law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. It highlights the influence of USA in Pakistani politics, financially and morally corrupt Pakistani military junta and poor living conditions of the low working class. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), Hanif's second novel, explores the status of women and religious minorities as suppressed and marginalized communities in Pakistan. The novel uncovers and exposes various forms of social, religious and physical abuses that consign these suppressed communities to being outcasts – rejected factions of society.

As discussed earlier, the writers that I have included in my research are illustrative of the recent thematic and stylistic trends in the Pakistani fiction which, I argue are characteristic of paracolonialism. There are a number of emerging Pakistani writers whose fiction is being recognized and appreciated not only within but also outside Pakistan. After Suleri, I had to make a choice between Kamila Shamsie, Uzma Aslam Khan and Feryal Ali Gauhar. Uzma Aslam Khan has published four novels including *The Story of Noble Rot* (2001), *Trespassing* (2003), *The Geometry of God* (2009) and *Thinner than Skin* (2009) whereas Feryal Ali Gauhar's novels include *The Scent of Wet Earth in August* (2002) and *No Space for Further Burials* (2007). Both Khan and Gauhar were writing in the context of War on Terror but their novels were mainly set in Afghanistan, and my research is focused on the representation of Pakistani society. Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* on the other hand, deals with the issues central to the paracolonialist concerns I had defined: it discusses different and distinctive phases from the history of Pakistan along with a whole section of the novel representing a post-9/11 USA and the War on Terror. Moreover the feminist discourse of *Burnt Shadows* also supports and extends Suleri's views on women's suppressed and subjugated identity in Pakistan by focusing on the female body. Lastly Shamsie was a more established and an internationally recognized fiction writer than Khan and Gauhar and therefore through her cultural status, her political impact is likely to have had greater international resonance. Hence I decided to include Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* for my research.

In terms of the male fiction writers, I considered three writers Nadeem Aslam Khan, Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif. Both Hamid and Hanif were closer to the idea and scope of this research and themes of paracolonialism. Khan, on the other hand, in *Maps for Lost Lovers* talks about the issue of Pakistani diaspora and his third novel *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) deals with the marginalization of women, atrocities done to common people in the name of religion and the role of foreign countries like Russia and USA in the ongoing War on Terror. However the novel is set in Afghanistan, outside my remit. So while Nadeem Aslam Khan has emerged as one of the best Pakistani fiction writers, his novels do not dissect the socio-political milieu of Pakistan contextualized in the political history of the country unlike Hamid and Hanif who are more focused on the role of religious narrative in Pakistan's politics and everyday life, a post-9/11 Pakistan and marginalization of women and religious minorities. Both these writers also try to engage an international readership by responding to West's discourse about Pakistan and Pakistanis which is relevant to paracolonialism.

I argue that these writers represent a newly emerging generation of Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers who are trying to deconstruct issues like socio-political chaos, economic crisis, religious fundamentalism and terrorism, sectarian and socio-economic divide and gender inequality in Pakistan. In order to understand a country, which has become very volatile and unstable because of religious radicalization and terrorism, it becomes very important to take into consideration what the literary intelligentsia thinks of the whole situation. Moreover the political

context of their writings, journalistic contributions on matters of indigenous and international importance and their exposure to Western discourse and society adds an additional perspective to their thinking and writing alike.

As discussed earlier, even though the paracolonial writers acknowledge the influence of the colonial past and its continuation in the socio-political milieu of the once colonized country, they deliberately dissociate their narratives from this past and focus their writings mainly on the post-independence era. Paracolonialism can be summarized as a critique of the current political, cultural and financial instability of a Third World postcolonial country while contextualizing itself in the theoretical paradigms of modernism, postmodernism and most importantly postcolonialism. I argue that paracolonialism has emerged as a reaction to a post-independence postcolonial narrative and its inability to completely rationalize the crumbling and unstable socio-political and financial state of many of the postcolonial nations. Hence, paracolonialism makes complete use of the resources offered to it by postcolonialism, postmodernism and modernism to create a parallel discourse which is more intent on exploring the present in isolation rather than situating it in the history of political struggle and resistance. The prefix 'para' also highlights this antithetical shift highlighting the simultaneous distance and the proximity and the contradictory rejection and acceptance of the colonial baggage. Postcolonial writers tend to appropriate and indigenize the colonial language to their benefit. The Pakistani paracolonial fiction writers, on the other hand, embrace the colonial language and use it not only to deconstruct the indigenous issues faced by their

nation and country but also use it to respond to the larger Western readership to deconstruct the international political crisis Pakistan is a part of and furnish the world with the stories emerging from these *othered* lands and communities in the Western discourse. Paracolonialism favours the local rather than universal, focuses on the micro-narratives of ordinary people and uses it to create a new space where hitherto marginalized communities could be given a voice. Paracolonial novels display many of the stylistic characteristics associated with postmodernist writing and its relationship with postmodernism is both one of separation and parallelism. Like postmodernism, paracolonialism also embraces and celebrates any form of ephemerality, chaos, fragmentation and discontinuity to politicize literary representations of society. The Pakistani paracolonial writers further go on to explore the dark spaces in the national history and to challenge the hegemonic social, political and religious discourses in Pakistan.

As I argue through this research that post-1988 paracolonial Anglophone Pakistani fiction indicates a radical break from its past literary traditions, hence, it is necessary to contextualize the study of this fiction in the rise of modernism as a distinct literary movement. Furthermore, postmodernism and postcolonialism also provide important analytical tools to explore this fiction of resistance against the hegemonic discourse of the West. Rooted in a cataclysmic and crisis riddled past and characterized by transformation in literature and art, modernism experimented with new forms in literature and marked a break with the past aesthetic traditions. Emerging as a strong aesthetic and literary movement during the late nineteenth and



early twentieth century, it indicated ‘a break-up, a devolution, some would say a dissolution’ (Bradbury and McFarlane, 1991, p. 20) from the past. Reacting to the Enlightenment project of the Eighteenth century, modernism highlighted the fragmentation and the chaos of the past through its literary and aesthetic traditions. This mood of fragmentation and ephemerality and an apocalyptic view of history, evident in the work of writers like Marx, Goethe, Dostoevsky, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, led modernism to disregard a coherent and meaningful past and reject any pre-modern conventions of art and literature. Bradbury and McFarlane (1991) argue that, ‘The crisis is a crisis of culture; it often involves an unhappy view of history – so that the Modernist writer is not simply the artist set free, but the artist under specific, apparently historical strain’ (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1991, p. 26). The writers tried various new and experimental techniques in their writings in an attempt to represent the world in their own different individualistic ways. While being sceptic towards the idea of reality in a narrative, its modes of representation and authenticity and the reliability of a linear narrative, Modernist fiction writers experimented with new narrative strategies. Pakistani paracolonial fiction writers, particularly Hamid and Suleri, also share the modernist scepticism towards reality and make use of the modernist narrative strategies to challenge the national historical narrative. Hamid uses more than one narrator in *Moth Smoke* (2001) and invites the reader to play an active role in producing meaning from the text. Whereas, in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) he employs the technique of dramatic monologue, uses first person narration and makes

the listener completely silent in order to complicate and challenge a narrative's role in creating meaning. Similarly, Suleri also plays with the concept a linear narrative time as her memories in *Meatless Days* (1989) keeps on oscillating between past and present. I argue through this research that, like the failure of the Enlightenment project, the socio-political chaos in Pakistan forced the Pakistani fiction writers to become more aggressive in the selection of issues to be represented and discussed through their narratives. By using the Modernist literary traditions, these paracolonial writers tend to explore the hitherto marginalized, suppressed and silenced voices in the Pakistani society. By making the personal and national narratives to compete against each other, they challenge the objectivity and reliability of the national past. Through situating the work of these Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers in modernism and the modernist literary traditions, it is possible to understand their break with postcolonialism and to explore their appropriation and reformulation of the literary culture of their colonial masters within the wider influences of an international English literature.

While paracolonialism shares with modernism the project of the break with the past, with history and the decay of imperialism, it is also a distinct phenomenon. Similarly its relationship with postmodernism is both one of separation and parallelism. Paracolonial novels display many of the stylistic characteristics associated with postmodernist writing. During the late 1960s, as a result of various anti-modern movements, postmodernism emerged symbolising new aesthetic traditions, a revived political consciousness and a philosophical experience. Defining

postmodernism has proven to be as improbable as charting its influence across a variety of fields like literature, philosophy, architecture, film, music, dance, television and historiography etc. The prefix 'post' indicates a linear periodization of the movement, from modernism to postmodernism, but it is not that simple as postmodernism simultaneously adopts and plays with many tendencies of modernism. Unlike modernism, postmodernism embraces and celebrates any form of ephemerality, chaos, fragmentation and discontinuity and these are also employed by paracolonial writers to politicize literary representations of society. Moreover paracolonialism also shares postmodernism's scepticism of meta-narratives or totalizing discourses and favours local rather than universal forms of knowledge and truth. Postmodernist theorists' rejection of the meta-narratives was based upon the argument that any attempt, through meta-narratives, to explain the world led to the exploitation of minorities situated on the fringes and the peripheries. Central to postmodernism is the acceptance of difference and otherness as a means to create a new space for a number of marginalized and 'othered' factions of the society including blacks, colonized, women and the working class etc. Hence postmodernism tends to challenge and disrupt all the dominating and neutralizing discourses. Pakistani Paracolonial writers, like the postmodern writers, are challenging the Western discourse on Pakistan and terrorism by creating a new literary space and furnishing the world with the stories emerging from these *othered* lands and communities in the Western discourse. Postmodernism's streak of

denaturalizing and challenging the discursively constructed natural order of things has also found popularity with fields like feminism and postcolonialism.

Postmodern fiction has served as a strong tool to challenge various hegemonic discourses by focusing on the hitherto suppressed and silenced voices. Emerging in the post-World War II era, the postmodern fiction is marked by self-reflexivity, narrative fragmentation, a challenge to history and hegemonic and suppressive systems of representation. While doing so postmodern fiction shifts the centre from the powerful to the marginalized and rejects any idea of a homogenous and monolithic world. In postcolonial fiction the narratives of the margins become an important tool to deconstruct the dominating discourses of the world. Postcolonial theory also manipulated its marginalized status, 'while helping turn marginality itself into a valuable intellectual commodity' (Huggan, 2001, p. vii). By making different discourses and narratives to compete against each other, postmodern writing engages itself with socio-political, cultural, aesthetic and economic issues of the world and simultaneously challenges the notions of reality.

Following the footsteps of postmodernism, postcolonialism also challenges the master-narrative of Imperialist discourse that established and exploited the binary of centre versus periphery. Postcolonialism, through a criticism of the strategies of representation in the Western discourse and by giving space to the narratives from the Third World countries, looks to challenge and denaturalize any form of institutionalization that supports a systemic exploitation of those living on the peripheries. Postcolonial theory, as a form of continuous 'cultural embattlement'

(Suleri, 1992, p. 763), is, 'a more or less distinct set of reading practices[...]preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon [...] relations of domination and subordination' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p. 12). With a focus on the reasons of the expansion of colonial empires, Postcolonial theory, indebted to the work of theorists like Frantz Fanon, Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, also engages itself with a study of anti-colonial movements, analysis of the colonial and postcolonial literary and non literary texts and archives and the socio-cultural structures of the once colonized societies. Hence, it can be argued that postcolonialism emerges as an, 'index of resistance, a perceived imperative to rewrite the social text of continuing imperial dominance' (Huggan, 1996, p. 3). Most of the countries which were once colonized still remain prone to political, social and economic instability. I argue that in a post-9/11 and post War on Terror world, postcolonialism provides an important analytical lens to explore the reaffirmation of the dividing binaries, like Islam versus the West. The work of Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers challenges the Western literary and non-literary discourse which, after 9/11, represents Islam and the West in a clash with each other. Boehmer also argues that 'postcolonial novel, play, or poem might be understood as itself an alternative mode of seizing hold upon the now, upon the right to define the moment' (Boehmer, 2010, p. 148). Pakistani Postcolonial fiction challenges the Western media's construction of a (mis)represented and stereotypical identity of Pakistan as an extremist, religiously fundamentalist and terrorist country. Hamid, in his novels *Moth Smoke* (2001) and *The Reluctant*

*Fundamentalist* (2008) and Shamsie in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) try to dismantle such negative social and political preconceptions and call for a larger and more inclusive community which is able to transcend national, religious and ethnic identities. Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1989), Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) focus more on the indigenous crisis in the postcolonial Pakistani society as the suppressed lives of women and their misrepresentation in the Pakistani patriarchal society. Through their fiction they give more space and voice to their female and marginalized characters and try to present a counter narrative to that of the patriarchal Pakistani society.

I contend that two years, 1979 and 2001, are pivotal in mapping this change on the Pakistani literary scene which forced fiction writers to become more political and aggressive. In 1979 General Zia-ul-Haq, the third martial law administrator in the country, hanged the then Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto through a controversial judicial sentence,<sup>4</sup> after toppling his democratic government a couple of years earlier. General Zia, during his military rule in Pakistan, Islamized the society for his own political motives, empowered the religious factions and trained the mujahedeen, in alliance with USA, to counter the Russian invasion in Afghanistan. His policies ultimately resulted into the emergence of many religious militant groups

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<sup>4</sup> A vast majority of Pakistani and international lawyers and jurists believe that the judicial sentence awarded to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto not only violated some basic norms of the law but was also politically motivated. There is a large body of work available that has highlighted the biased proceedings and the circumstances of the trial. Among these are: Bhattai, H. S. (1979) *Portrait of a Political Murder*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications; Schhofield, V. (1989) *Bhutto: Trial and Execution*. London: Cassel. and Rajratnam, T. W. (1989) *A Judiciary in Crisis? The Trial of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto*. Lahore: Classic.

in the country which have played a great role in destabilizing the social and political strata of Pakistan. The second significant year was 2001 when the 9/11 incident took place after which USA announced a war against terror and invaded Iraq and Afghanistan. The year 2001 not only shook the basis of US global hegemony but it also affected the socio-political and economic structures of Pakistan as well. The rhetoric of War against Terror, presence of US Army in Afghanistan, the increasing influence of the Taliban and their extremist religious ideologies in Pakistan and deaths of thousands of innocent civilians in suicide and drone attacks are some of the aftershocks of the US War against Terror which Pakistan has had to face during the last decade or so.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan<sup>5</sup> got separated from India and won its freedom from the British colonial raj in 1947. It is ironic that even though the country came into being on the basis of a religious ideology<sup>6</sup>, the first few decades of Pakistani history did not witness Islam as a defining factor in legislature and constitution making. This hesitation in ‘assigning the place of Islam in the country’s polity’ (Suleri, 1962, p. 3) led to a social and political chaos which still encompasses the country’s politics. Islam had been a dominant factor which shaped the social

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<sup>5</sup> The acronym Pakistan, first appeared in 1933 in a pamphlet titled *Now or Never*, means the land of the pure people. The purpose of this acronym was to bring the Muslims of the Indo-Pak subcontinent under one flag and to motivate them in struggle for a separate homeland. The name further highlights the religious undertones in the creation of Pakistan where the Muslims of the subcontinent struggled for the creation of an Islamic state.

<sup>6</sup> Religious nationalism best describes the basic premise which was the core of the struggle of the Muslims of the subcontinent. Saeed, K. B. (1968) *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857-1948*. London: Oxford University Press. and Malik, H. (1963) *Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan*. Washington DC: Public Affairs Press. are two of the many books which have covered the theme in detail.

structures of the country right from the beginning and still continues to do so.

Haqqani argues:

Nevertheless Pakistan's status as an Islamic ideological state is rooted deeply in history and is linked closely both with the praetorian ambitions of the Pakistani military and the Pakistani elite's worldview. For the foreseeable future, Islam will remain a significant factor in Pakistan's politics.

(Haqqani, 2004, p. 3)

Used by the political and military leadership alike, in forming ideological constructs, the role of Islam as the most powerful discourse is far too great to be ignored. The manipulation and misuse of the Islamic discourse to transform the Pakistani society into a group of religious radicals and extremists is a dominant theme in the writings of these paracolonial novelists. I argue through this research that this unique intersection of politics, religion and post-1988 Pakistani fiction results in a new shift in the postcolonial theory, which I call paracolonialism. A strong influence of the religious discourse in the Pakistani politics and society, its manipulation by the political, military and religious elite, rise of an extremist religious discourse in the country and its influence on the social and political strata of Pakistan forced these Pakistani fiction writers to find a new theoretical paradigm to explore and deconstruct these issues. General Zia exploited the power of this discourse to its maximum and used Islam as a state formation strategy. His efforts to transform Pakistan into a theocratic Islamic state led to the empowerment of militant religious groups, popularity of the narrative of *Jihad* and manoeuvring of the religious discourse to radicalize the society against the West. Gul asserts that 'much of the recent and current turmoil in the country has its roots in the seismic events of 1979



and policies taken in response to them’ (Gul, 2009, p. 13). With the help of Jammāt-i-Islami,<sup>7</sup> a leading religious and political party in Pakistan, General Zia took concrete steps to implement the Islamic penal laws in the country. The focus was to enforce *sharia* (the Islamic moral and religious code) through an Islamic judiciary, *madrasahs* (religious seminaries) and an Islamization of the general masses. Rouse claims that General Zia’s rule witnessed ‘powerful alliance between the guardians of the state and guardians of public and private morality’ (Rouse, 1986, p. 34) and Jammāt-i-Islami acted as a civilian paramilitary force. By empowering the Jammāt and other religious groups General Zia was successful in achieving a greater state control over the citizenry and exploited masses’ and political parties’ religious affiliations to curb any challenge to his rule. Nasr argues:

Beyond this, state leaders instituted the use of Islamic symbolism in public discourse. It became common to begin all public meetings with recitation of the Qur’an, and more important, the state took it upon itself to enforce prayer and fasting—obligatory religious practices that had hitherto remained matters of private concern.

(Nasr, 2001, p. 141)

In order to win support of the masses General Zia legitimized his implementations of strict Islamic rules from *Majlis-i-Shura*,<sup>8</sup> (the advisory Council of

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<sup>7</sup> The Jamaat-i-Islami is the main spokesman of Islamization in Pakistan. In fact Jamaat’s active role in the politics of Pakistan motivated and led other religious groups to create space for their distinct religious identities. Founded in August 1941 in Lahore, Jamaat had always been a key player in the political process in Pakistan. For a detailed study of Jamaat-i-Islami’s role in Pakistan’s politics see Nasr, V. S. (1994) *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*. London: IB Taurus Publishers. and Rashid, A. (2003) *Revolution to Revolution: Jamaat-e-Islami in the Politics of Pakistan*. Karachi: Royal Book Company.

<sup>8</sup> As a move to have collaboration between the Pakistani civil society and his military regime General Zia appointed Majlis-i-Shura (Federal Advisory Council) in 1981. Among its members were intellectuals, scholars, economists, journalists and theologians who were sympathetic to General Zia’s military regime. For an overview of Zia’s political strategies see Craig B. (ed.) (1985) *Zia’s Pakistan*:

Islamic Ideology) established by himself in 1980 and declared himself as a safeguard of Islam and Pakistan (Jalal, 1990, p. 283). The most notorious of General Zia's Islamic reforms was *Hudood Ordinance* which announced severe punishments for theft, adultery, consumption of alcohol, robbery and apostasy (Weiss, 1987, p. 2). Women's role was restricted and confined within the four walls of the house and they were barred from playing any significant part in the social evolution and the national progress (Rabbani, 2005, pp. 496-97). As part of General Zia's educational reforms, Urdu was emphasized more in schools than English. There were changes in the curricula as well with the inclusion of narratives from Islamic history and a greater emphasis on the teaching of verses from the Holy Quran. Religious seminaries were provided with huge funding as they became the recruitment agencies for the guerrilla fighters to fight against Russia in Afghanistan. General Zia vociferously used these Islamic reforms to divert nation's attention from the political and economic crisis, ensure his illegitimate rule and to gain financial and moral support from other Muslim states. Moreover through a collaboration of the *mullah* and the military General Zia was successful in creating a 'plethora of home-grown militant groups' (Irfani, 2009, p. 16) which are active even today in the northern areas of Pakistan in the form of Taliban and other religious militias. These militant groups financially and logistically support Al-Qaida and all such terrorist militant organizations which are fighting to implement shariah not only in Pakistan and Afghanistan but throughout the world. General Zia's success in transforming large

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*Politics and Stability in a Frontline State*. Lahore: Vanguard; Syed, M. H. (1990) *Pakistan's Politics: The Zia Years*. Lahore: Progressive Publishers.

factions of the Pakistani society into religiously radicalized people and using them to strengthening his control and domination in the country not only made Islam a very strong tool but also a powerful discourse which could be manipulated to win masses' support. Nasr asserts:

Islamization redefined state-society relations, and changed the balance of power between the two...In time, however, it became the ideology of choice for state leaders in these weak postcolonial states that otherwise lacked strong ideological tools and enjoyed only precarious hegemony over society.

(Nasr, 2001, p. 158)

A religiously radicalized society, presence of militant groups and their terrorist activities within and outside the country, increasing number of religious seminaries and their unimaginable access to finances and arms resulted in a metamorphosis of the Pakistani society. The divide between the liberals and fundamentalists grew larger than ever and along with religious groups, politicians also started using religious discourse and narrative to motivate masses for their political gains. General Zia's Islamization mission has caused much harm to Pakistani society. Pakistani paracolonial writers not only deconstruct the aftermath of General Zia's religious radicalization of the society, they also try to intervene into the hegemonic Western discourse and its negative construction of Pakistan as a terrorist country.

9/11 is the second most significant incident that has brought much trouble to Pakistan. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 shattered US self-belief and challenged its global hegemony. Everything that USA had boasted to be a symbol of was questioned and threatened. Al-Qaida had breached US security and the fall of the Twin Towers was seen as a symbolic fall of the greatest super power in the world.

USA revised its foreign and economic policy, revisited its definitions of enemies and friends and initiated a War against Terror. Many of the militants who had joined Taliban in Afghanistan were trained in mujahedeen camps established by the Pakistan military and funded by USA during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. USA had accepted the role of these mujahedeen as a geo-political asset and a 'counterbalance force'(Labévière, 2000, p. 6) first against Russia and then against Iran but 9/11 forced USA to revise its foreign policy. Burgat states:

The attacks on September 11, 2001, then precipitated, in a much more drastic manner, the reassessment of the status of the allies or the instruments (the Taliban or the armed groups sent to Kashmir) of Islamabad's "Islamic" diplomacy.

(Burgat, 2008, p. 16)

USA had been one of the main sponsors in establishing these militant religious militias in Pakistan and Afghanistan to strengthen its control in Asia. Labévière (2000) goes on to argue about the US role in providing financial support for Taliban and making them the biggest threat to the world:

Where does the money for this dangerous proselytism come from —the money that finances mosques and Koran schools, supports Islamist organizations, orchestrates the fight against the "impious" regimes of the Arab-Muslim world, and organizes the activism of certain Muslim communities of Europe?...the real threat lies elsewhere: in Saudi Arabia and other oil monarchies allied with the United States. The greatest world power is fully aware of this development. Indeed, its information agencies have encouraged it. In certain parts of the world, the CIA and its Saudi and Pakistani homologues continue to sponsor Islamism.

(Labévière, 2000, p. 14)

The US and the Pakistani strategic asset backfired in 2001. The Department of Homeland Security was established in 2001 in USA to safeguard its people

against further terrorist attacks. The US and NATO forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to topple the Taliban government which was accused of providing shelter to Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaida militants. Through military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq USA continued to assert its global hegemony over the rest of the world and particularly on those it had deemed as its enemies. Moreover the post-9/11 rhetoric of historic and cultural difference once again reaffirmed and further increased the distance between the West and Islam and reasserted the binaries of us versus them, civilized versus terrorist and good versus evil. Stereotypes such as ignorant, unenlightened, extremist and untrustworthy terrorists were reinforced not only through various forms of print and electronic discourse but more dangerously through the political discourse in the West.<sup>9</sup> Morey and Yaqin (2011) comment on this post-9/11 frenzy of the West to target the Muslims as dangerous and untrustworthy religious extremists when they argue:

...the scale and spectacle of the Twin Towers and Pentagon attacks, and the reaction to them, has thrust a certain type of Orientalist stereotype firmly back onto our cinema and television screens, into our news media, and into the mouths of politicians who either lack the historical sense to understand where they come from, or whose agendas are best served by ignoring their provenance.

(Morey and Yaqin, 2011, p. 3)

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<sup>9</sup> Morey and Yaqin (2011) explore the construction and continuous reinforcement of subversive and derogatory stereotypes about Muslims not only in an historical perspective but it also looks into various forms of mass media and new media strategies to strengthen the binary and divide between the Muslim World and the West. They argue that the political discourse in the post-9/11 world has also taken an extreme anti-Muslim position. For further detailed study in this area please consult: Haddad, Y. Y. (ed.) (2002) *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sardar, Z. and Davies, M. W. (2010) 'Freeze Framing Muslims: Hollywood and the Slideshow of Western Imagination' *Interventions*, 12:2, pp. 239-250.; Mamdani, M. (2004) *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: USA, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Three Leaves Press.

Morey and Yaqin (2011) argue that media, cultural and political reconstructions of reductive tropes of the Muslims are agenda motivated, biased and inaccurate. They believe that Western discourse, even if invites the Muslims to join and engage in a meaningful and purposeful dialogue but at the same time resists any such genuine effort. They argue:

National security, strategic interests, multiculturalism, integration, preventing terrorism – in fact, all the buzzwords of the contemporary political life do little more than obscure a chronically one-sided dialogue that Muslims are invited to join but not change, or forever remain outside the boundaries of civil debate, doomed to be spoken for and represented, but never to speak themselves.

(Morey and Yaqin, 2011, p. 2)

Singh (2012) also points out:

This figure of decrepitude, available in the many images of the non-Western, Islamic, bearded, turbaned, radical jihadi is invoked in popular media to give credence to American lives. While the media prevalently constructs the figure of the terrorist with the accompanying markers of illiteracy, fundamentalism, hatred, and violence, this figure is rearticulated through postcolonial fiction to produce the disempowered refugee, the disenchanting immigrant, and the dissident citizen.

(Singh, 2012, p. 174)

The assertion of such binaries and political reinforcement of negative identity constructions of the Muslims provided USA with the justification to impose state violence over other countries in order to secure its own people and culture. Such forces of evil were to be curbed which threatened the foundations of US culture and civilization, even if the state violence was necessary to be used against them. The invasion of Afghanistan by the NATO forces and the resultant war caused many

problems for Pakistan as Taliban fled from Afghanistan and took refuge in the hilly areas of border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Afghan Taliban enjoyed a support of various Pakistani religious parties due to their similar religious agendas and of the Pashtun tribes settled in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan because of their ethnic affiliations. Moreover the militant groups raised and trained through a joint venture of the Pakistan Army and CIA during the martial law regime of General Zia, announced their support for the Afghan Taliban. Afghan Taliban and their Pakistani militant supporters started a joint gorilla war, not only against USA but also against military and other law enforcement agencies of Pakistan. Pakistani society underwent a traumatic experience as these extremist groups started targeting innocent civilians in many suicide attacks in various cities and caused havoc in many parts of the country. The pro-religious and anti-US narrative helped them to recruit a large number of youths to carry out their militant operations. The various Pakistani political parties are also divided in their views on the role of Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The religious and right wing political parties support the option and possibility of dialogue with the Taliban whereas the left wing parties speak openly and vociferously in favour of a military operation against such anti-state actors. This divide has also seeped into the Pakistani society which also appears confused and divided on this matter due to the religious outlook of these militant groups.

In the aftermath of General Zia's religious radicalization of the Pakistani society, the invasion of Afghanistan by the US and NATO forces in 2001 and

Taliban's role in 9/11 incident, Pakistani society not only underwent an internal rupture but on the international political scene it also got labelled as a terrorist sympathizer. The social structure got destroyed due to Islamization and this resulted in the emergence of a very aggressive pro-religious faction in the society. Salman Rushdie has also highlighted this chaotic and fragmentary situation of the Pakistani society succinctly:

Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind. Perhaps the pigments used were the wrong ones, impermanent, like Leonardo's; or perhaps the place was just insufficiently imagined, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriff-baring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi Shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong.  
(Rushdie, 1995, p. 87)

These indigenous and international crisis that have haunted Pakistan during the last couple of decades provided the paracolonial Pakistani fiction writers with a fertile ground where they could experiment with the narrative strategies and stylistic techniques and write about and deconstruct crumbling social structures, radicalization of the masses, religious narratives as a tool to exploit and a critically reflect on Pakistan's position internationally. It was not only the Western gaze but also the internal social decay which this new generation of Pakistani fiction writers has tried to explore and deconstruct through their writings. Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid, Mohammed Hanif, Sara Suleri, Nadeem Aslam, Uzma Aslam Khan, Feryal Ali Gauhar, Monica Ali and Daniyal Mueenuddin are some of those names who have established themselves as Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers internationally. Indo-Anglian fiction has already been recognized as a distinct genre a long time ago but



the same did not happen for their Pakistani counterparts. Even though names like Ahmed Ali, Zulfikar Ghose and Bapsi Sidhwa have already been recognized, the acceptance that this new generation of Pakistani writers has got from an international readership during the last few years is remarkable and historically unmatched. Through their writings they have discussed wars, class, gender, poverty, religion and terrorism in the context of social, cultural and geo-political situation of Pakistan. They focus on the various silences in Pakistani society and they seek to unearth the many stories buried in these silences. Through their fiction they have even challenged Pakistan's official narrative of the past showing how it has misconstrued the past and where it is replete with silences through tempered representations of historical and political facts. Hence it was vital to analyze these Pakistani writers and situate their paracolonialism by contextualizing their work in General Zia's military regime, its aftermath and in a post-9/11 world political scenario.

With their focus on the Western readers and issues concerning both Pakistan and the West, these writers attract a large readership from the West. Moreover by writing in the language of their colonial masters they are challenging Western readers' misconstrued representations and false preconceptions of their country and people. Unlike their predecessors they are not only critical of their country's military, political and religious elite but they are also trying to add a perspective to the factors leading to the geo-political and financial crisis that their country is going through. Writing is a political act for them and with a juggernaut of historical and political discourse pouring down on their minds; these writers have situated their

texts in the socio-political milieu of their country. The novels I analyze for this research are *Meatless Days* (1989) by Suleri, *Burnt Shadows* (2009) by Shamsie, *Moth Smoke* (2001 [2000]) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008 [2007]) by Hamid and finally *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) by Hanif. The reasons for grouping these six novels for this research are outlined below.

While writing about Pakistan these writers have examined and dissected the various factors hindering a progressive social evolution and political stability in Pakistan. On some of the issues there even seems to be a consensus among them which leads to some common themes emerging as a pattern in their writings. First of all these texts are a *tour de Islamization* of the Pakistani society. Most of these writers not only explore the process of state-controlled religious metamorphosis of the society during the 1980s but also see it as a major reason behind the current wave of terrorism in the country. Secondly, texts like *Burnt Shadows* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are overt in their dissection of the Western political discourse and base their intervention on the demonic role of capitalism and globalization in the exploitation of Third World countries. Moreover they have taken some of the biggest social, cultural and political challenges that Pakistan is facing in the 21st century and have tried to deconstruct them through their narratives. Thirdly they have challenged the Western dominant and hegemonic discourse which constructs Pakistanis as terrorists. With their focus on the indigenous and international crisis of Pakistan these writers have emerged on the international political scene as political

commentators and analysts. Lastly and most importantly these writers try to alienate their texts from the burdens of colonialism and manipulative colonial strategies while discussing the plight of their country. Their writings seem to be a conscious and collective move discarding the act of blaming their colonial past responsible for all the chaos. They are a post-post-colonial or, as I have already discussed in detail, a Paracolonial generation of writers. As Pakistan stands on a crossroad, struggling to cope with the issue of terrorism and having a faltering and untrustworthy relationship with the West, so it becomes imperative to explore the viewpoints of the literary intelligentsia of Pakistan and also the way they are interacting with the rest of the world through their fiction.

Contextualizing the work of four Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers in the socio-political and religious milieu of their country, this research employs the theoretical paradigms of modernism, postmodernism and postcolonialism to explore and understand a post-9/11 Pakistan embedded in conflicting and competing narratives and discourses. Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers, writing after 1988, show a remarkable shift in terms of content and writing strategies as compared to their predecessors. They have taken up various social and political concerns more vigorously through their writings and provide an aggressive commentary on matters of indigenous and international significance. Their fiction offers a rational perspective on various socio-political and cultural factors, contributing to social decay, and finally intervenes in the Western discourse about Pakistan and its people. Through this research, I further highlight the fact that postcolonial fiction, at least in

case of Pakistan, has undergone a shift as the fiction writers are no longer trying to contextualize their texts in the colonial era. I argue that this narrative strategy on the part of Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers should be termed as ‘Paracolonialism’ or ‘Paracolonial fiction’. The concept of Paracolonialism may prove very helpful in exploring and understanding the literary texts being written and produced in other postcolonial nations.

Beginning with the textual analysis of Sara Suleri’s *Meatless Days* (1989), which provides a necessary religious, historical and political background to the whole research; later chapters not only explore a post-9/11 Pakistani society but also respond to the sceptic and anti-Muslim Western discourse. The chapters on Shamsie and Hamid bring the capitalist and Islamic fundamentalist discourse against each other. Shamsie in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and particularly Hamid in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) argue that both these discourses have fuelled each other in the past and a rise of religious extremist narrative in the Muslim societies is a logical outcome of the Western capitalist policies. More importantly, both these writers seek to engage the Western and the Pakistani viewpoint in a dialogic process through their fiction. Shamsie and Hamid’s novels are written with a conscious ‘fundamentalist writes back’ strategy presenting the world with an opportunity to understand and listen to the case of Pakistani people, majority of whom have suffered a lot because of religious extremism, suicide attacks, militant activities by the terrorists and a post War on Terror situation in Afghanistan and northern areas of Pakistan. The sixth chapter of this thesis focuses on the analysis Hanif’s *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*

(2008) and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011). *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, like Suleri's *Meatless Days* is set in General Zia's military regime in Pakistan but in a satirical tone. Hanif belittles General Zia and his religious zeal by ridiculing his decisions and policies as the head of the state and holds him responsible for empowering the religious discourse and religio-political parties in Pakistan. His second novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is set in today's Pakistan and discusses subjugation of religious minorities, marginalization of women and an unstable political situation in the Pakistani society.

Contemporary Pakistani literature is an under-researched area. The current research not only provides an in-depth study of the significance of these writers' literary oeuvre but also is the first attempt to evaluate the literary works of the Pakistani English novelists produced after 1988, situating it in the context of General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization and a post-9/11 anti-Pakistan discourse. Therefore I believe that the evaluation of this contemporary Anglophone Pakistani fiction produced by Suleri, Shamsie, Hamid and Hanif is much needed and timely.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Contexts**

The current research, as discussed in the first chapter, is focused on the analysis of the works of four Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers writing during and after the 1980s. By situating their work in the socio-political and historical milieu of Pakistan this research explores the Pakistani literary intelligentsia's treatment of their national past, the idea of their country's current geo-political turbulence and their response to this chaos. This chapter focuses not only on the review of the relevant literature but also on the discussion of various frameworks and theoretical paradigms that guide the analysis of these novels. I argue that the contemporary Anglophone Pakistani fiction indicates a radical shift, both in terms of content and structure, from the literature produced by their predecessors. This shift in Pakistani fiction has some parallels with the historical emergence of modernism – and later postmodernism – specifically because it represents a break with the preceding literary traditions and the emergence of a politically charged fiction, which foregrounds a socio-political and cultural decay in the Pakistani society. Moreover Suleri, Shamsie, Hamid and Hanif make use of various Postmodernist writing strategies such as multiple narrative voices, temporal disorder, playfulness and historiographic metafiction to construct their narratives about Pakistan. Furthermore, their fiction emerges as narratives of resistance against the hegemonic foreign and indigenous discourses.

With their texts embedded in the political history of their country and their selves in a postcolonial state, these Pakistani writers' fiction emerges out as a unique blend of postcolonial and postmodernist concerns and writing strategies. This chapter encompasses an overview of these literary paradigms and further helps to explain various theoretical frameworks, guiding the methodology of this research. I argue that through an intersection of religion, politics, fiction and various philosophical paradigms, the post-1988 Anglophone Pakistani fiction indicates a shift in postcolonial theory. Even though this shift, best described as paracolonialism, makes use of various critical and reflective formulations and ideas offered by modernism, postmodernism and postcolonialism, it still shows an independent yet parallel existence with its own distinct ideas and features. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part encompasses the conditions of the emergence of modernism and highlights various writing traditions that emerged as a result of this movement. Moreover, by exploring the similarities between the literary traditions of the West during modernism and the Anglophone Pakistani fiction produced after 1988 this part further goes on to contextualize this break with the past traditions in the emergence of a new literary culture and a philosophical shift, that is paracolonialism. The second part highlights various characteristics of the postmodern literature which can be found in Pakistani fiction with a particular focus on the need to give space to marginalized and suppressed voices within a society. Along with that, it also highlights some of the overlapping concerns of postmodernism and postcolonialism, while discussing major theorists of both the paradigms, and paracolonialism's

exploitation of both the theories to its own benefit. The third and the final part of the literature review chapter focuses on the scarcity of book length critical studies undertaken to analyze various facets of the Anglophone Pakistani fiction and foregrounds the specific interventions that this research makes to the already available literature in the field.

Modernism is and has been a contentious and widely debated movement with a strong sense of transformation in literature, art and thought. The movement marks a particular era in literary history with distinctive characteristics, experimentation with new forms of art and literature and a break with the aesthetic traditions of the past. This transformation of art and literature emerged from the cataclysmic and crisis oriented past and hence is very much historicist in its nature. I argue through this research that an unstable democratic culture marked with intermittent military rules, wars with India, corrupt political and military leadership and indigenous ethnic and socio-economic crises has also forced the Pakistani fiction writers to discard their past literary traditions and experiment with different genres of fiction writing to represent this socio-political chaos and question the authenticity and reliability of their national past. Like modernist writers and thinkers, Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers are also more political in their ideas. Their writings make full use of the analytical tools and philosophical considerations provided to them by modernism, postmodernism and postcolonialism and lead to the realization of a new philosophical project; paracolonialism.



Modernism emerged as a strong international movement during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century in a world where industrial revolution, imperial expansion and World War I had unsettled issues like religion, truth, morality and language, providing ground for a fresh debate. Being catastrophic in its nature it indicates an abrupt break with the past tradition. Bradbury and McFarlane (1991) assert that modernism is, ‘not so much a revolution, which implies a turning over, even a turning back, but rather a break-up, a devolution, some would say a dissolution’ (Bradbury and McFarlane, 1991, p. 20). Baudelaire in his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863) first used the term modernity. He argued that it was ‘transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is the one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immutable’ (Harvey, 1999, p. 10). Woolf also recognized this transition in art and culture in 1910<sup>10</sup> and remarked:

All human relations have shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature.

(Woolf, 1924, p. 5)

Modernization had brought some material benefits in the form of industrialization and European global expansion but also reduced ‘humans to rational(izing) animals [...] perceived as more complex and consequently more emotionally, psychologically and technologically dependant’ (Childs, 2000, p. 14). It

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<sup>10</sup>Despite Woolf’s specifying 1910 as the year that marks the start of modernism, the attempts to ascertain a unanimously agreed upon year or event as the starting point of the movement have been in vain. D. H. Lawrence advocated the year 1915 when the old world ended whereas many others have spoken in favour of 1922 which is the year of the production of works like *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land* and *Jacob’s Room*.

neither fostered individual autonomy nor added anything substantial to the spiritual aspects of life. While modernization served as a tool of human subjugation and exploitation, modernism, on the other hand, emerged as an aesthetic and cultural movement which embodied hatred (for the past) and enthusiasm (for the new). It carried delight in the rejection of the old yet there was fear of the new. It is this complexity of celebration, tainted with the fear of the new, which gave it its paradoxical characteristics. Berman (1982) in *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, elaborates this paradoxical nature of modernism:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environment and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish.

(Berman, 1982, p. 15)

The implementation of the modernist project is well understood through the image of ‘creative destruction’. It was simply impossible to create a new world without destroying the old one. The process of creative destruction is an on-going one and such a project was bound to bring feelings of fragmentation, disjunction and disturbance with it, which the thinkers and the writers of the age observed. Berman (1982), in his study of modernism, argues that the chaotic, fragmented and ephemeral nature of modernism was confronted by many writers like Marx, Baudelaire, Dostoevsky and Goethe, who dealt with it in their own distinctive ways.

Frisby (1985) points out that thinkers, like Simmel and Benjamin, were obsessed with the contingent and ephemeral nature of their experience of time and space. Ephemeral, transitory and the fleeting was the dominant mood of the time. W. B. Yeats (1921) was able to capture this dilemma through the following lines in *The Second Coming*:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

Modernism's obsession with the fleeting, transitory, arbitrary, chaotic and fortuitous nature of everything leads it to disrespect a coherent and meaningful past. It demands a complete break from any sort of pre-modern conventions of art, literature or even the socio-historical narratives of the past. Modernism asserted that the only meaning or explanation that can be extracted from the past:

has to be discovered and defined from within the maelstrom of change, a maelstrom that affects terms of discussion as well as whatever it is that is being discussed. Modernity, therefore, not only entails a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions, but is characterised by a never ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself.

(Harvey, 1999, pp. 11-12)

Paracolonialism, as a new philosophical and theoretical intervention, also emerges as a reaction against the social and political narratives of Pakistani history which is replete with inauthentic, unreliable and often misleading explanations of the national history. By experimenting with the various forms of fiction writing, the paracolonial Pakistani writers are not only intent upon challenging the authenticity and the reliability of their national historical narrative but are also committed to exploring the dark spaces in this narrative by revisiting it.

Childs argues that 'Modernism has frequently been seen as aesthetic and cultural reaction to late modernity and modernisation' (Childs, 2000, p. 16). This reaction to modernity not only led modernism to discard a sense of any meaningful and coherent past but also to rejection of all the preceding literary and aesthetic traditions. Habermas (1983) believes that this project of modernity was first realized during the eighteenth century when the enlightenment thinkers tried to develop a 'universal system of morality and law, objective science and autonomous art' (Habermas, 1983, p. 9). Only scientific domination and a rational system of thought and social organization could ensure human emancipation and universal and eternal qualities of human life. Under this optimistic vision of life 'the enlightenment thinkers welcomed the maelstrom of change and saw the transitoriness, the fleeting, and the fragmentary as the necessary condition through which the modernizing project could be achieved' (Harvey, 1999, p. 13). This enlightenment project did not turn out to be as emancipating for man as it promised to be in the beginning and its claims of rationality and universal human freedom started being questioned by the start of Twentieth century. Walter Benjamin, the leading modernist intellectual, gave his famous image of the nightmare of the history which speaks for the modernists' view of the past:

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is

turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.  
This storm is what we call progress.  
(Benjamin, 1973, pp. 259-60)

This image elaborates the modernist thinkers' view of history as apocalyptic. It indicates a departure point from the past and announces a new future with a complete shift in aesthetic representations and socio-political relations. Bradbury and McFarlane also claim that, 'The crisis is a crisis of culture; it often involves an unhappy view of history – so that the Modernist writer is not simply the artist set free, but the artist under specific, apparently historical strain' (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1991, p. 26). The artistic representation of these ruinous and condemning images of history is evident in the works of writers like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. Two major intellectuals, Max Weber and Nietzsche also joined the ranks of the critics in raising their suspicions of the enlightenment project. Bernstein (1985) summarises Weber's argument as:

Weber argued that the hope and expectation of the Enlightenment thinkers was a bitter and ironic illusion. They maintained a strong necessary linkage between the growth of science, rationality, and universal human freedom. But when unmasked and understood, the legacy of the Enlightenment was the triumph of [...] purposive-instrumental rationality. This form of rationality affects and infects the entire range of social and cultural life encompassing economic structures, law, bureaucratic administration, and even the arts. The growth of [purposive-instrumental rationality] does not lead to the concrete realization of the universal freedom but to the creation of an 'iron age' of bureaucratic rationality from which there is no escape.

(Bernstein, 1985, p. 5)

Harvey also believes that Nietzsche<sup>11</sup> was a significant influence in depriving Enlightenment project of its special position and granting modernism a new life. He argues:

By the beginning of the Twentieth century, and particularly after Nietzsche's intervention, it was no longer possible to accord Enlightenment reason a privileged status in the definition of the eternal and immutable essence of human nature. To the degree that Nietzsche had led the way in placing aesthetics above science, rationality, and politics, so the exploration of aesthetic experience – 'beyond good and evil' – became a powerful means to establish a new mythology as to what the eternal and the immutable might be about in the myths of all the ephemerality, fragmentation, and patent chaos of modern life. This gave a new role, and a new impetus, to cultural Modernism.

(Harvey, 1999, p. 18)

After the failure of the enlightenment reason in delivering the eternal and immutable for the mankind, the artist had to play an active role and develop a new mythology to find and define the essence of his age. Modernism, argues Neil Lazarus (2011) in *The Postcolonial Unconscious*:

[...] displaced and received cultural formations of its time and consolidated itself at their expense. Not only did it succeed in establishing itself as the dominant aesthetic formation in its time and place, it construed its own particular dispositions.

(Lazarus, 2011, p. 27)

Modernism was able to first create and then maintain its monopoly over the past literary traditions by imposing a selective tradition through which it reorganized and rewrote a new cultural history, which in turn appropriated the whole of modernity. In the study of Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers, Lazarus' concept of 'Peripheral

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<sup>11</sup>While Weber was critical of enlightenment's purposive-instrumental rationality, Nietzsche, on the other hand, was able to 'discern vital energies that were wild, primitive and completely merciless' (Kuna, 1991, p. 446) beneath the surface of modern life.

Modernism’ or ‘the aesthetic of third-worldness’ becomes relevant where he explores the interlink between capitalism, modernity and modernism. Situating his discussion in Trotsky’s (1930) ‘Law of uneven and Combined Development’ and Fredric Jameson’s (1986) ‘Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism’, Lazarus (2011) argues that modernism evaluates modernity for manipulating the tools of modernization for political and aesthetic purposes as a reaction to which modernism moves from the periphery, in towards the centre (Lazarus, 2011, p. 53). In *The Politics of Modernism* (1990), Raymond Williams also argues that literary modernism, ‘involves looking, from time to time, from outside the metropolis: from the deprived hinterlands, where different forces are moving, and from the poor world which has always been peripheral to the metropolitan systems’ (Williams, 1990, p. 47). Lazarus further argues that, ‘postcolonial studies, as in modernism [...] a certain limited optic on the world, a *‘selective tradition’*, has been imagined, and is proposed, as a universal’ (Lazarus, 2011, p. 32). Postcolonial critics have also formulated their own understanding and reasoning, have constructed their own specific positionality and situation in the world order and have emphasized these as cultural universals. In this particular way, the postcolonial critics and writers also appear to be following the modernist procedures and protocols. The paracolonial Pakistani writers, I argue, are aware of this trap and intend to challenge any form of cultural universalization. The Janus-faced nature of their fiction not only allows them to criticize any such attempt on an

indigenous level, within the national historical narrative, but they also confront the Western discourse that relegates them and their nation to the margins.

Castle (2007) discusses the development of modernism in three phases:

an early pre-war and wartime phase, 1890–1918; a second inter-war phase, 1919–1939; and, overlapping this second phase, a third phase, 1930s–1940s, which marked the rise, in the US and Britain, of professional academic critics. In the first phase, through the First World War, writers and artists were eager to set themselves apart from their Victorian predecessors and Edwardian contemporaries.

(Castle, 2007, p. 20)

The second phase:

coincides with the emergence of the so-called High Modernism, which in one respect designates a certain peak of innovation and experimentation in style, narrative, and language. High Modernist aesthetics privileged SUBJECTIVITY, language, allusion, and allegory over the early Modernist penchant for objectivity, image, impressionism, and symbol.

(Castle, 2007, p. 20)

Castle's description of these two phases of modernism and rise of formalism during the third phase indicates a search for new modes and methods. The writers tried various new and experimental techniques<sup>12</sup> in their writings and tried to represent the world in their own different individualistic ways<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup>In the context of various experimental techniques used by the modernist writers Childs (2000) asserts that modernism as an international art term covers many avant-garde styles and movements like, 'Expressionism, Imagism, Surrealism, Futurism, Dadaism, Vorticism, Formalism and, in writing if not painting, Impressionism [and] attempts to create a tradition of the new (Childs, 2000, p. 14).

<sup>13</sup>Christopher Butler (1994), in his book *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900–1916*, also examines various new radical techniques like Collage, Cubism and Atonality emerging in the works of Picasso, Schoenberg and Eliot. He goes on to discuss expressionism, theories of the unconscious, self-referentiality and linguistic innovations with reference to the works of Joseph Conrad, James Joyce and Thomas Mann.



Peter Childs<sup>14</sup> establishes modernism as a reaction to the literary and aesthetic traditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century realism and goes on to discuss this movement's shift into postmodernism. He defines modernism as:

[...] both the culmination of the past and the harbinger of the future, pinpointing a moment of potential breakdown in socio-cultural relations and aesthetic representation. It is not surprising that artistic reactions and responses bifurcated into the largely celebratory (Marinetti, Le Corbusier, Mayakovsky) and, particularly in the British Isles, the primarily condemnatory or apocalyptic and despairing (T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, D. H. Lawrence).

(Childs, 2000, p. 16)

The modernist fiction is very much concerned with the concept of reality and forms of its representations while being sceptic towards the linearity of a narrative and fiction's attempts to establish a stable surface of reality. Pakistani paracolonial fiction writers, particularly Mohsin Hamid, have also tried to experiment with the modernist scepticism towards reality. By employing modernist narrative techniques they challenge the historical narrative that claims to be unambiguous, authentic and all explaining. As Conrad narrates his story from two different perspectives in *Under Western Eyes* (1911), similarly Hamid uses more than one narrator in *Moth Smoke* (2001) and hence problematizes the concept of truth and reality. He further goes on to play with idea of narration and structure in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) where he not only uses first person narration, when the protagonist narrates his

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<sup>14</sup>Peter Childs' *Modernism* (2001) gives, though a very basic yet, a relevant account of this avant-garde movement of the early twentieth century. He gives a detailed and succinct account of changes in fiction, poetry, drama, film and aesthetic theory of the time. The influence of the key thinkers like Nietzsche, Marx, Darwin, Freud and Saussure has also been discussed to elaborate the modernist trends in the writings of Joyce, Conrad, Yeats, Eliot, Woolf and Becket.

account of his personal life, but also makes his listener to stay completely silent as well.

In its effort to break from an apocalyptic and cataclysmic past, fiction of the modern era also underwent significant changes. It questioned the elements of reality and objectivity. While doing so there were many experiments in the form and content of the novel. I argue through this research that the social and political crisis that Pakistan underwent during and after 1980s made the Pakistani fiction writers more aggressive and political in the selection of their narratives and narrative strategies. They have tried to experiment by manipulating the aesthetic boundaries of narrative writing and have explored the hidden and silenced voices from the muddle of human life which I argue is a basic characteristic of paracolonialism. Their fiction keeps oscillating between an exploration of the dark spaces in history and an unpredictability of the future. They also question the reality of their national history by revisiting it and by questioning the objectivity and reliability of the national past. In doing so the paracolonial Pakistani fiction writers not only try to transcend their national and geographical affiliations but also try to provide solutions for the crisis their country is going through. Paracolonialism, like modernism appears as a reaction to literary, cultural and socio-political past and tries to construct a new mythology of life by experimenting with and exploring new ways and techniques in literature. This theoretical shift is an effort to construct a new identity by alienating it from the past traditionalist ideologies of subjugation and exploitation and by further contextualizing man in the perspective of a promising and hopeful future.

Even though modernism had brought too much experimentation and a number of new techniques in art and literature, it lost its vigour as a revolutionary force (Jameson, 1984) during the late 1960s and postmodernism appeared out of the chrysalis of various anti-modern movements. Postmodernism has emerged as the most influential and the most debated term across a wide range of areas like literature, philosophy, architecture, film, music, dance, television and historiography. The term can neither be regarded as a synonym for the contemporary nor can it be recognized as an international movement, with its roots and major influence primarily in USA and Europe. The movement has often been viewed in terms of new aesthetic traditions, an ethical or political consciousness, a philosophical experience, a break from or a continuity of modernism and much more. With its variable influence across a variety of disciplines there are disagreements about its various tenets and also about its emergence<sup>15</sup>. With its impact on such varied scale and spanning across a diverse range of fields there are endless, and most of the times contesting, definitions of the term postmodernism.

The prefix 'post' suggests the emergence of postmodernism follows modernism in a chronological order and as a distinct social and cultural phenomenon, indicating a radical break from modernism. But this idea of linear periodization of the movement is not that simple as postmodernism simultaneously adopts and plays with many tendencies of modernism. Along with many other

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<sup>15</sup>Tim Woods (2009) argues that the emergence of postmodernism can be located during different time periods across a variety of disciplines. He contends that the influence of postmodernism can be seen during the late 1950s in art, in late 1960s for architecture, in the early 1980s for cultural theory and in the late 1980s for many social sciences.

contradictions inherent in the nature of postmodernism, any attempts to define the term fall a victim to this very predicament and questions like: Does postmodernism as a new movement reject modernism or look to revise, reconsider and align some of its basic tenets, remain contestable and debateable territories.

Postmodernism shows a contradictory dependence on modernism as it can either be regarded as a break from modernism or its continuity as well. It is this self-contradictory nature of postmodernism that Hutcheon (1988) describes when she argues that, 'Postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges' (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 3). Jameson sees postmodernism as a periodizing concept, 'whose function is to correlate the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order' (Jameson, 1984, p. 113). Bauman (1991) on the other hand rejects the idea of postmodernism as a chronological period that follows modernism and argues that postmodernism is: 'modernity conscious of its true nature' (Bauman, 1991, p. 187). Bauman and other critics of his league<sup>16</sup> prefer to think of postmodernism in terms of a self-reflexive and self-evaluative modernism which does whatever modernism did, but instead of feelings of loss and lament it does it in a celebratory tone. Whatever modernism lamented about, for example a lost past, collapsed selfhood and fragmentized existence, postmodernism accepted that as new modes of social and cultural expressions and existence. None the less postmodernism affected almost

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<sup>16</sup>Steven Connor (2004) also agrees with Bauman's idea when he states that, 'Postmodernist work attempts to draw experience and meaning, shock, and analysis into synchrony. Being modernist always meant not quite realizing that you were so. Being Postmodernist always involved the awareness that you were so' (Connor, 2004, p. 10).

every aspect of human life and intellectual inquiry and emerged as ‘a battleground of conflicting opinions and political forces’ (Harvey, 1999, p. 39). Lyotard describes the postmodern world as a place where:

Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: you listen to reggae; you watch a Western; you eat McDonald’s at midday and local cuisine at night; you wear Paris perfume in Tokyo and dress retro in Hong Kong; knowledge is the stuff of TV game shows. . . . Together, artist, gallery owner, critic, and public indulge one another in the Anything Goes – it is time to relax.

(Lyotard, 1997, p. 8)

Another striking account of the emergence of postmodernism as a cultural transformation and shift in the Western sensibility comes by Huyssens as:

What appears on one level as the latest fad, advertising pitch and hollow spectacle is part of a slowly emerging cultural transformation in Western societies, a change in sensibility for which the term ‘Postmodern’ is actually, at least for now, wholly adequate...in an important sector of our culture there is a noticeable shift in sensibility, practices and discourse formations which distinguishes a Postmodern set of assumptions, experiences and propositions from that of a preceding period.

(Huysens 1984, p. 33)

As a result of shrinking of space and time, unprecedented availability of information through television, mobile phones and internet and a major transformation of traditions and civilizations the world has become multinational, multimedia and globalized, ultimately creating a new sensibility and cultural transformation. The US literary critic Ihab Hassan, in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1982) produced a list of differences between the modernist and postmodernist art and sketched some basic differences between the two movements. Hassan’s list remains prone to many controversial debates, of which he

himself was conscious when he wrote that, ‘the dichotomies this table represents remain insecure, equivocal. For differences shift, defer, even collapse [...] and inversions and exceptions, in both Modernism and Postmodernism, abound’ (Hassan, 1982, p. 269). In spite of its loose ends Hassan’s comparison demonstrates postmodernism’s preoccupation with a strong sense of celebration and radicalism. The list goes on to highlight that any attempt to define or determine the boundaries of postmodernity requires acknowledging its interdisciplinary nature and its interdependence on philosophy, art, politics and various social phenomena and analysis.

Charles Jencks’ words, in *What is Postmodernism?*, are quite revealing of the movement’s all-engulfing and all-embracing quality when he claims:

Post-Modernism is now a world-wide movement in all the arts and disciplines. Post-modern politics varies from the conviction politics of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair to the search for a new liberalism that can combine multiculturalism and universal rights; post-modern food varies from Cambozola (Camembert and Gorgonzola improved by combining) to California Cuisine (French plus Pacific Rim plus supposedly healthy). There are more books on Post-Modernism than its parent Modernism, which is not to say that it is more mature or better, but just here to stay. We are well past the age where we can merely accept or reject this new ‘ism’; it is too omnipresent for either approach.

(Jencks, 1996, p. 6)

Postmodernism had overpowered every other movement or mode of thought during the last three decades of the Twentieth century. From politics to food, from philosophy to art and literature, nothing could escape the dictates and dictums of Postmodernism.

An important fact about postmodernism is its complete acceptance of ephemerality, chaos, fragmentation and discontinuity. Unlike modernism, it does not try to resist or counteract the transitory or the fleeting element but rather celebrates it as if it is all that is there. Foucault urges the postmodern man to ‘prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic’ (Harvey, 1999, p. 44). This embrace and celebration of the nomadic and transitory leads to theorists like Michel Foucault and Jean Francois Lyotard’s rejection of any kind of meta-narrative and totalizing discourse through which all things could be claimed to be connected or explained.

Lyotard rejects the meta-narratives or grand histories as manipulative and constructed discourses giving flawed, misconstrued and politically motivated accounts of reality. Instead he favours micro-narratives of *petites histories* as he argues that, ‘main argument is that the era is marked by the demise of *grandes histories* or an incredulity towards meta-narratives’ (Lyotard, 1979, p. xxiv). He claims that enlightenment’s narrative of progress and political emancipation and Hegel’s narrative of scientific reason, along with many other modernist narratives, trying to make a coherent and all-encompassing sense of the world, have collapsed. Postmodernism, Lyotard argues, realized the flawed nature of any such endeavour. The demise of meta-narratives gives way to localized, plural and micro-narratives

giving more space and significance to heterogeneity<sup>17</sup>. Lyotard's criticism of totalizing discourses is based upon their creation and reinforcement through power structures. They serve as a discourse which functions to legitimize any sort of claim that suits the power structures. Instead his focus is on the micro-narratives of individuals which provide heterogeneous and alternate accounts and versions of reality. His suspicion and rejection of meta-narratives is in accordance with the postmodernist agenda to give dominance to the hitherto suppressed and marginalized discourses. He asserts:

We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives...we can resort neither to the dialectic of spirit nor even to the emancipation of the humanity as a validation for post-modern scientific discourse. But as we have just seen, the little narrative [*petit recit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention, most particularly in science.

(Lyotard, 1979, p. 60)

By rejecting meta-narratives, postmodernism focuses more on those discourses and narratives that represent the issues of the marginalized and subdued communities situated at the periphery. In this context, Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) notion of 'minor literatures' also becomes relevant as they argue that 'minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language [...] in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 16). Minor literatures emerge from the peripheries and are inherently political in nature and

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<sup>17</sup>Lyotard argues that such meta-narratives ignore the heterogeneity of human existence, try to suppress the individual in the name of universal and all explaining narratives and act as the agents of 'the exercise of terror' (Lyotard, 1979, p. 64).



show resistance to the hegemonic discourses of the centre. They further go on to argue:

Everything in them is political...its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnifies, because a whole other story is vibrating within it.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 17)

The Anglophone paracolonial Pakistani fiction also conforms to this idea of minor literatures. Pakistani writers are trying to react to their marginalized status and demeaning and stereotypical constructions through the Western political and media discourse. Being paracolonial writers, they write and respond in the language of the centre, challenge the power structures while being located at the periphery and question the authenticity of the meta-narrative of War on Terror and Pakistan's alleged involvement in terrorism. As they are trying to respond to a political discourse, their texts are embedded in a definite political agenda and even their personal stories (micro-narratives) are connected to the larger - indigenous and international - political contexts. *Burnt Shadows* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* specifically present a challenge to the Western discourse, by contextualizing their narratives in a post-9/11 world, which represents Pakistan as a terrorist country and Pakistanis as terrorist suspects. *Meatless Days*, though highlight its female protagonists' troubled and marginalized lives, is also necessarily rooted in the socio-political chaos of Pakistan where personal cannot escape the political. Deleuze and Guattari (1986) further go on to highlight the positionality of a writer who is situated in a marginalized space as they argue:

[...] literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation...and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, P. 17)

I further argue that these paracolonial Pakistani writers, because of their marginalized status, are in a better position to challenge the hegemonic and manipulative discourses and present a counter narrative, highlighting the hitherto suppressed and ignored stories. The feminist discourse of these writers is also an apt example of minor literature. Pakistani society is a patriarchal one where men enjoy an absolute power over the lives of the women. This denial of any progressive social and political role for the women, in Pakistan, has relegated them to the margins. Women's troublesome existence and marginalized status is evident through the narratives of Pakistani fiction writers, where a woman's life is marked by pain and suffering. Suleri and Shamsie's texts explore this marginalized and subdued existence of women in Pakistan through their narratives. Derrida's concept of catachresis becomes important and relevant in highlighting the main facets of the feminist discourse of these female Pakistani writers. I argue through this research that the misuse and misinterpretation of the religious discourse had a catachrestic influence on the identity of the Pakistani women. Contextualizing Suleri and Shamsie's feminist discourse in Derrida and Spivak's ideas about catachresis, it can be claimed that by categorizing them through the master word 'women', they are deprived of their individual identity and existence. Derrida argues that catachresis is

a, 'violent and forced abusive inscription of a sign, the imposition of a sign upon a meaning which did not yet have its own proper sign in language' (Derrida, 1982, p. 255). Catachresis, for Derrida, functions as a fake, replacing the original whereas Spivak terms catachresis as a framework which tries at, 'reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value coding' (Spivak, 1990, p. 228) and further intends to exploit those who it claims to represent. She argues:

Master words are catachresis [...] that there are no literal referents, there are no 'true' examples of the 'true worker', the 'true woman', the 'true proletarian' who would actually stand for the ideals in terms of which you have mobilized.

(Spivak, 1990, p. 104)

Suleri, Shamsie and even Hanif's feminist discourse focuses on female body to describe their female protagonists. It is either women's biological roles, bird shaped burn marks on the protagonist's body or female body as a 'war zone where competing warriors have trampled and left their marks' (Hanif, 2011, p. 96) that become the reason for their only definition and identity. These female protagonists' faceless existence in the Pakistani fiction highlights the fact that their lives are deprived of any meaningful socio-political role and a distinct identity. The catachrestic nature of the social and religious discourse in Pakistan subdued and suppressed the struggle of women and marginalized them further. The Pakistani fiction writers argue that any attempt at understanding women, simply as an extension of their roles in the family, deprives them of an independent existence and identity and disrupts their chances to challenge and outgrow the suppressive and hegemonic discourses.

Influenced by Lyotard's anti-foundationalist line, Jean Baudrillard also believes in lack of reality in the postmodernist world. He argues that contrary to the earlier times, contemporary communication is dependent upon various images from the electronic mass media. This globalized electronic media creates a world of images, codes, simulacra and a digitalized reality. The reality is constructed through images where these images have become more real than the real, which he calls simulation. While representing a material reality first the sign distorts, then disguises and in the final stage it replaces the reality (Baudrillard, 2003, p. 1). As the demarcation between the real and the simulation is blurred, as the sign or the image is no longer a true representation of the real, there is a, 'generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal' (Baudrillard, 2003, p. 1). The hyperreality becomes so dominant and strong that it attains the status of the benchmark for the real and 'the world becomes a universe of simulacra without references' (Woods, 2009, p. 27). It is not the distortion of the real but instead an exact reduplication of the real which ultimately erases all the doubts of its being a counterfeit. Woods (2009) further argues that Baudrillard, based upon his ideas of hyper-reality and simulation, problematizes the issue of history<sup>18</sup> as well. Baudrillard argues:

We leave history to enter simulation... This is by no means a despairing hypothesis, unless we regard simulation as a higher form of alienation – which I certainly do not. It is precisely in history that we are alienated, and if we leave history we also leave alienation.

(Baudrillard, 2003, p. 59)

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<sup>18</sup>Baudrillard argues that there is no further possibility of any social change as we are headed towards the end of history. The social boundaries have collapsed and, 'only signs without referents, empty, senseless, absurd and elliptical signs, absorb us' (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 74).

Through incredulity towards meta-narratives and all totalizing discourses and a belief in disappearance of reality postmodernism favours local rather than universal forms of knowledge and truth. Postmodernist theorists contend that those with a control over its construction and then propagation enjoy absolute power. This control allows them to exploit the minorities and those sitting on the fringes and the peripheries. The relation between power and knowledge emerges as a central theme in Foucault's writings who urges us to:

conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc. by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination.

(Foucault, 1972, p. 159)

Foucault believes that truth, meaning and beliefs are discursive constructions which are used to subjugate and suppress the marginalized<sup>19</sup> and serve as a tool for social control and domination within their particular contexts. Based on Foucault and Lyotard's rejection of meta-narratives, Huyssens (1984) harshly criticizes the imperialistic discourse of modernism that claimed to speak for others (blacks, colonized, women and other minorities and the working class). He insists on understanding and accepting difference and otherness as a means to offer new space for a number of marginalized and hitherto suppressed social movements. This argument that all the groups and sects have a right to represent and speak for

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<sup>19</sup>Foucault's ideas appealed to various socialist movements emerging during the 1960s including feminists, gays, religious autonomists and ethnic groups and led to a criticism of any totalizing discourse like communism and imperialism. Foucault argues that only by intervening in the modes of knowledge production, such repressive discursive practices could be challenged and resisted.

themselves is central not only to postmodernist but also to my idea of paracolonial thought.

Postmodernism's streak of denaturalizing and challenging the discursively constructed natural order of things has found popularity with fields like feminism and postcolonialism which in turn intend to deconstruct various forms of biases established through hegemonic discourses. Such fields have emerged with an a-systemic understanding and analysis and look to disrupt the dominating, neutralizing and centralizing discourses through multiplicity of perspectives. Postcolonialism, like postmodernism, seeks to challenge the logocentric master-narratives of the Western discourse that established and exploited the binary of centre versus periphery. With postmodernism's ruthless analysis and criticism of the Western discursive strategies of creating its 'other' and its focus on giving voice to the narratives from the marginalized and suppressed communities it provided postcolonialism with a renewed energy and vigour. Postcolonialism and postmodernism both challenge the centrality of any system of hegemony through a criticism of the strategies of representation which they believe assist to subordinate and silence any voices of disagreement and protest. Postcolonialism by giving space to the discourse from the Third World countries intends to challenge and denaturalize the Western discourse of enlightenment which had institutionalized a systemic exploitation of those living on the peripheries. Both postmodernism and postcolonialism share common themes, rhetoric and strategic concerns and employ similar strategies to meet their ends. Quayson argues:

In the general usage of both terms, there is an uneasy oscillation between social referencing and the analysis of representations, with this oscillation frequently being resolved by subsuming the analysis of social referents under the analysis of regimes of representation.

(Quayson, 2005, p. 88)

Postcolonialism, broadly defining, explores the experience of colonization, its impacts on the colonizer and the colonized, colonial and anti-colonial discourses and a study of related issues like slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, race, gender and history. Along with the exploration of the conditions which led to the expansion of the European project of colonialism, postcolonialism also engages with a study of the once colonized societies and cultures when they won their freedom through a violent and rigorous struggle against colonialism. Lyotard's rejection of meta-narratives is a strong influence in Homi Bhabha's formulation of decentralizing agenda of postcolonialism. Bhabha's (1992) definition of postcolonialism also indicates some of the overlapping concerns between postmodernism and postcolonialism:

Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples [...] As a mode of analysis, it attempts to revise those nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition.

(Bhabha, 1992, pp. 171-72)

Moreover, the presence of the prefix 'post' and suffix 'ism' also puts postmodernism and postcolonialism in similar situations.<sup>20</sup> Both postmodernism and postcolonialism try to analyse the pre-established socio-political and cultural values in terms of their formation and getting accepted as completely natural, real and true. By doing so, they often challenge the acceptability of these values as a function of discourse which serve to establish political hegemony and domination. Postmodern fiction has served as a strong tool to challenge various hegemonic discourses by focusing on the hitherto suppressed and silenced voices.

Marked by narrative fragmentation, self-reflexivity, play with formalist devices, an exploration of and a challenge to various systems of representation and its attempts to demythologize history, postmodern fiction emerged as a reaction against enlightenment thought and a modernist treatment of literature. The term usually refers to the fiction that emerged during and after the 1960s in a post-World War II and a post-Cold War scenario. As modernist fiction was concerned with the epistemological dominant and focused the question 'how we know?', the postmodernist fiction shifted its focus on the ontological dominant interrogating the reality or even the possibilities of the existence of knowledge. Periodizing the emergence of postmodern fiction is a problematic task yet there had been efforts to recognize a chronological pattern by some critics like Tim Woods (2009) who categorizes three phases of the emergence of postmodern fiction.

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<sup>20</sup> Just like postmodernism the prefix 'post' in postcolonialism, problematizes its relationship with colonialism in terms of the confusion in defining it either as a logical temporal occurrence or a break from its predecessor. Moreover the suffix 'ism' makes them, 'second-order meditations...upon real (and imagined) conditions in the contemporary world and are to be taken seriously as contributing to an understanding of the world in which we live' (Quayson, 2005, p. 89).



The writings of the '1960s to describe fiction which sought to subvert its own structural and formal bases, and which implied that reality only existed in the language that described it...during the 1970s and early 1980s to describe those works which also embodies within them explicit critiques of aspects of late capitalist society...More recently, it has been applied to fiction which reflects the social ethos of the late capitalism.

(Woods, 2009, pp. 65-66)

He further goes on to argue that 'Postmodern fiction is rather an ongoing process of problematization or subversion of realist (mainstream) aesthetic ideology' (Woods, 2009, p. 64). Another theme that runs in common across most of the postmodernist fiction is that of exhaustion. The postmodern writers believe that it is impossible to have a true representation of the world as fiction has already exhausted all its means of doing so. Their belief that it is impossible to write an original work, turned the focus of their writing towards the 'end of writing' itself. Imitation of art, instead of an imitation of nature, became more important for postmodernist fiction writers which led to the emergence of a self-reflexive art practice (Barthes, 1972, p. 256). A postmodern writer, Lyotard argues, acts as a philosopher and the texts that he produces:

[...] are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for.

(Lyotard, 1979, p. 81)

Postmodernist fiction questions the notions of presence, authenticity and originality as Foucault also noted that, 'the point of creation, the unity of a work, of a period, of a theme [...] the mark of originality and the infinite wealth of hidden meanings' (Foucault, 1972, p. 230) are the dominant ideas of the past which and are

being vociferously challenged and undermined now. By thinking of such values as 'the basic premise of bourgeois liberalism' (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 13), postmodern fiction sees them as constructed systems of domination which were unnatural and emerged out of necessity. The marginalized and decentralized become more significant and prominent while rejecting any concept of homogenous and monolithic world. This postmodernist concern with otherness and the acceptability of 'other' is quite obvious in postmodern literature. McHale (1987) finds Foucault's image of *heterotopia* appropriate to explain what postmodern fiction is trying to portray through the 'coexistence of a large number of fragmentary possible worlds' in 'an impossible space'. But at the same time, postmodernist fiction is self-conscious and self-reflexive enough not to make the peripheral a new centre. It realizes that even the, 'moralities and histories are relative, but this does not mean they do not exist' (Burgin, 1986, p. 198). Foucault believes that the postmodern novel, as compared to modernist fiction, is more concerned with the exploration of ontological questions than epistemological issues. Instead of focusing on the issues of reality and truth, postmodern fiction challenges the very idea of truth, reality or the world we are a part of and poses questions like 'What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated? (McHale, 1987, p. 10). The nature of postmodern writing makes the reader wonder what and whom to believe and what and whom to

discard and reject. It places the reader in a situation which McHale believes is a 'suspension of belief as well as disbelief' (McHale, 1987, p. 33).

Postmodern fiction has shown so much variation in terms of narrative structure and the content that it becomes almost impossible to define and determine a few characteristics through which it could be explained. Lewis (2001) also argues that even though the postmodernist fiction did not emerge as a unified movement, there are certain characteristics which are common in writings marked as postmodernist:

Temporal disorder; the erosion of the sense of time; a pervasive and pointless use of pastiche; a foregrounding of words as fragmenting material signs; the loose association of ideas; paranoia; and vicious circles, or a loss of distinction between logically separate levels of discourse.

(Lewis, 2001, p. 123)

Sim (2001) sums up some common features of the postmodern fiction in *The American Novel and the Way We Live Now* (1983) as:

In the fiction of [Postmodernist writers] [...] virtually everything and everyone exists in such a radical state of distortion and aberration that there is no way of determining from which conditions in the real world they have been derived or from what standard of sanity they may be said to depart. The conventions of verisimilitude and sanity have been nullified.

(Sim, 2001, p. 123)

By challenging this concept of reality, the postmodern fiction engages itself with the cultural and political questions. Linda Hutcheon (1988, p. 106) argues that postmodern fiction is best understood through 'historiographic metafiction' which consciously distorts history, either through anachronism or by blending it with fantasy. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* she differs from

many postmodernist theorists who think of history as, ‘the dustbin of an obsolete episteme’ (Huysen, 1981, p. 35) whereas Hutcheon argues that it is rather being rethought. History has not simply disappeared, ‘but its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are texts’ (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 16). She believes that postmodernist fiction questions the authenticity and reliability of the past by considering it as a series of problematic and contradictory texts. Historical, cultural and social realities of the past are constructed through discourse and a genuine historicity is only possible when its constructed nature is acknowledged and taken into account. Hence postmodern fiction does not discard past but rather incorporates and modifies it. For her the inter-textual nature of the past and the problems of writing about history pose some serious questions about issues like identity, subjectivity and representation. Fredrics Jameson’s groundbreaking work *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*<sup>21</sup>(1991) is of great significance in this regard. I argue that paracolonial fiction picks up on this characteristic of postmodern fiction and problematizes the issue of the authenticity of the historical narrative. The Pakistani paracolonial fiction writers revisit and represent some of the important events, which not only shaped their national history but also changed the international political scene. By revisiting

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<sup>21</sup>Jameson argues that postmodernity indicates ‘a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary theory and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity’ and ‘a schizophrenic subjectivity’ (Jameson, 1991, p. 6). Postmodern fiction, by disturbing the linear coherence of the narrative, not only disrupts the past but also corrupts the present too.

such events they challenge the discourse which emerged as a reaction to these events, present possible alternative versions of the reality and try to deconstruct it from the point of view of the marginalized and the suppressed.

Postcolonialism has also borrowed many concepts from postmodernism and tries to challenge the discourse of colonialism and imperialism as a mode of suppression and exploitation of the native races. Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the rise of colonialism as a very strong mode of political, economic, cultural and epistemological conquest of the non-European cultures and aimed at ‘a violent appropriation and exploitation of native races and spaces by European powers’ (Nayar, 2008, p. 3). The colonial empires strengthened their economies on the expanse of the weaker colonized nations by exploiting their resources and manpower. Along with the economic exploitation, the colonized nations suffered from social, cultural and linguistic changes with a strong and pervasive impact on their native cultures. In the post-World War II era, most of the colonized nations won their freedom back from the colonial empires either through political or armed struggle. As a result of decolonization, primarily during the twentieth century, most of the colonized territories won freedom for themselves. These postcolonial societies underwent various shifts on political, historical and even emotional levels but ironically, almost all the nations, once under the hegemony of the empire, are still reeling under unstable and turbulent political, economic and intellectual crises.

Postcolonial theory as an academic discipline focuses on the literary analysis of the colonial and postcolonial texts, research in the archives of the colonial

government, politics of knowledge and discourse production and a critique of economic strategies based upon imperialism (Loomba, 1998, p. XII). Many theorists like Fanon, Said, Bhabha and Spivak have tried to analyze and explain the praxis of imperialism, exploitative tactics of various colonial empires, modes of the struggle of the native against the empires and the efforts of the postcolonial nations to rejuvenate their native traditions and cultures.

Edward W. Said explores various strategies through which the Europeans first constructed and then dominated the Orient. His groundbreaking work *Orientalism* (1978) identifies and unmask various European institutions, disciplines and texts which created knowledge about the Orient. He believes that the knowledge produced through such fallacious discourse resulted in the emergence of negative stereotypes like ignorant, uncivilized, barbaric, prehistoric and untrustworthy for the people of the Orient and made the whole imperialist project look natural and absolutely needed. Through *Orientalism*(1978) Said uncovers the ideological facades of imperialism and argues that the European discourse about the Orient not only preceded Colonialism but also became a tool to dominate and hegemonize the colonized world. Foucault also argues that in every society:

[...] the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by certain number of procedures, whose role is to ward off its dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.

(Foucault, 1987, p. 52)

The production of discourse is a monitored process which, in case of colonial enterprise, gave authority and power to the European nations to construct their

‘other’ as incapable of speaking and representing themselves. As the Europeans spoke on their other’s behalf, they constructed their identity in terms of various degrading stereotypes and hence silenced and marginalized them further. Said asserts that for Europe, Orient was, ‘the source of its civilizations and languages, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other’ (Said, 1978, p. 1). Through the cultural and discursive appropriation of the weaker, the imperialists constructed their own identity by attributing themselves with ‘unlike other’ qualities. In order to transcend the discursive manipulation, the colonized ‘other’ had to resist this construction of degrading and false identity. His way of resisting this inaccurate and erroneous European knowledge about the Orient was to reverse the binary of the Orient and the Occident and to give voice and authority to the narratives coming from the ‘other’; the Orient.

Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) is based upon the premise that the influence and power of culture is undeniable in justifying and establishing the domination and hegemony of the European empires. He believes that the imperial culture supported and asserted the Empire’s right to control and rule the non-native lands. Pakistani paracolonial fiction borrows many ideas enunciated by Said like (mis)representation and stereotypical identity of Pakistan as an extremist, religious fundamentalist and terrorist country. I argue that Said’s thesis was unilateral as his criticism of the Western discourse ignored the ambivalent and bilateral nature of the discursive and cultural construction of stereotypes. Paracolonialism, on the other hand, is more interested in a Janus-faced and dialogic process where Pakistani fiction

writers not only challenge the Western electronic and print media based political and cultural discourse but they also invite their Western readers to formulate and express their own views on the whole process. Paracolonial fiction not only involves employing certain narrative strategies, it also favours a rethinking and re-appropriation of already constructed stereotypes. Hamid, in particular, in his novels *Moth Smoke* (2001) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) has tried to challenge the Western stereotypical gaze of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan. Shamsie, in *Burnt Shadows* (2009), also tries to dismantle such negative social and political preconceptions and calls for a larger and more inclusive community which is able to transcend national, religious and ethnic identities.

Spivak, a Feminist, is known for her ground breaking essay and a leading text of postcolonial theory *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). She adapts the term 'Subaltern' from Gramsci (Green, 2002, p.2) and employs it to signify 'subsistence farmers, unorganized peasant labour, the tribal and communities of zero workers on the street or in the countryside' (Spivak, 1988, p. 84). Initially the term subaltern was used to describe the people who were subjugated and exploited on the basis of their race, class, religion or ethnicity. Gramsci, along with peasants, slaves, marginalized races and religious groups, regards women as subalterns who suffer because of social and economic disparities. Extending Gramsci's argument, Spivak believes that through the exploitative discursive strategies, the marginalized communities, particularly the Third World women, were misrepresented which led to their generalized, false and stereotypical representation. She further stresses that the



liberal academic feminism silenced and suppressed the native woman while representing them through their texts or speaking on their behalf. She argues:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernisation.

(Spivak, 1988, p. 306)

The native woman is doubly silenced, first by colonialism and then by the patriarchal social structures she has to live in. Spivak points out that native woman's voice is silenced both in the colonial and nationalist discourses. Hence, she calls for an intellectual project which should strive to give voice to the marginalized and suppressed communities like the native women. Suleri's *Meatless Days*, Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* present the suppressed and marginalized lives of women and their misrepresentation in the Pakistani patriarchal society. As paracolonial fiction writers they give more space and voice to their female characters, a socially and culturally 'othered' community, and try to present a counter narrative to that of the Pakistani patriarchal society.

Bhabha's ideas of hybridity, stereotypes, mimicry and ambivalence have largely influenced the field of postcolonial inquiry as mentioned earlier. He argues that:

The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.

(Bhabha, 1994, p. 70)

Even though Bhabha agrees with Said that the colonial discourse preceded the actual rule, he criticises Said's reading of the colonial discourse as unidirectional, which fixed the identities of the colonizer and the colonized (Bhabha, 1990, p. 299). Unlike Said's idea of one-dimensional relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, Bhabha believes it to be one of continuous negotiation and further asserts that, 'colonial discourse is actually conflicted, ambivalent, and rive with contradictions' (Bhabha, 1990, p. 306). On the one hand the colonial discourse constructed the native as strange, mysterious and unknowable whereas at the same time it claimed that the native is completely knowable and controllable. He argues that, 'colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely 'knowable and visible' (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 70-71). He claims such contradictions rooted in the colonial discourse make it ambivalent and the colonial discourse does not establish stable and fixed identities for the colonized nations; instead it highlights its own fractured nature. The colonizer has to construct a stereotypical image in the first place and then has to repeat and assert it endless times in order to make it universal. Moreover colonizer's own identity is dependent upon these stereotypes of the 'other' as he defines himself to be the opposite of the native. Hence the interdependency of both the colonizer and the colonized on each other in terms of defining themselves makes the identity of the two moving and unstable. Bhabha (1990) further goes on to argue that in postcolonial discourse:

The marginal or minority is not the space of a celebratory, or utopian, self-marginalization. It is a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity – progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past – that rationalize the authoritarian, normalizing

tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest of the ethnic prerogative.

(Bhabha, 1990, p. 4)

Furthermore, the issue of identity for those postcolonial writers, who are settled in the West, becomes more complicated. Their writings and lives are prone to disjuncture and displacement. For Bhabha (1994) these are productive conditions as he believes that such displacements lead to a hybrid and in-between space for the writer where the issue of identity can be rethought, revised and recast. He argues:

The 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society.

(Bhabha, 1994, pp. 1-2)

The paracolonial Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers, as argued in the first chapter, exploit their exilic status and exposure to the Western life to their benefit. They position themselves in the hybrid or 'in-between space' (Bhabha, 1994, pp.1-2), which comes into existence as a result of a clash between their national roots and knowledge of the Western social and literary traditions, and explore issues like identity, gender, race and class through their writings. Moreover, their exposure to the Western literary traditions enables them to experiment with various literary forms which predominantly emerged from the West. The fiction of the paracolonial Pakistani writers has tried to deconstruct not only the social, political and cultural problems within the country but have also looked to explore various issues that Pakistan and the Pakistani nation is facing in the international global world. These writers have targeted an international readership in order to shatter the Occidental viewpoint of the Pakistanis as a nation of terrorists and have tried to initiate a

dialogue between the Western and the Islamic world. In a post-9/11 world, where terrorism has emerged as the biggest threat to the modern world, it becomes imperative to study and analyze such texts which are presenting some alternate perspectives and giving a voice to those deemed as a threat to the civilized world. Even though during the last few years, literary critics have tried to explore some of the facets of the Anglophone Pakistani fiction, unfortunately it still remains an under-researched area.

Unfortunately in spite of this body of work being very important in the context of War on Terror and a global rise in religious extremism, it is impossible to find a book length study that tries to explore the Anglophone Pakistani fiction and describes its salient characteristics. As mentioned earlier, apart from Tariq Rahman's *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* (1991) a couple of other available books are Cara N. Cilano's *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State* (2013) and *Post-9/11 Espionage Fiction in the US and Pakistan: Spies and "Terrorists"* (2014), which were published during the course of this research. Along with a particular focus on the works of Ahmed Ali, Zulfiqar Ghose and Bapsi Sidhwa, Rehman goes on to discuss the works of many pre- and post-partition writers who can be labelled as Pakistanis. Rehman argues that the term Pakistani used in this book is, 'loose rather than strict, cultural rather than political' (Rehman, 1991, p. 11). Even though a study of fiction writers occupies the maximum space in his book yet it also provides a brief overview of poetry, drama and prose writing in Pakistan. Rehman goes on to draw parallels between Pakistani and Urdu, Sindhi,

Caribbean and US literature. Rehman argues that Anglophone Pakistani literature fails to fictionalize major historical and political events as compared to other Third World literatures (Rehman, 1991, p. 124). Cilano's *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State* (2013), on the other hand, discusses almost all the major Pakistani English fiction writers, spanning from 1947 to 2009. Cilano's work is seminal as it discusses the work of Pakistani fiction writers in the historical and political context. She argues that her work is focused on three primary concerns:

[...] how the literary texts represent the event or development; how the literary treatment of this event or development informs the fictions' portrayal of idea, nation and/or state as a suitable foundation for collective belonging; and what literary devices or themes the fictions use to articulate their effective attachments to shared identifications.

(Cilano, 2013, p. 10)

But at the same time the scope of the book becomes so vast, through a discussion of so many novelists and a historical period of seven decades, it fails to focus on some of the very important issues in detail. Secondly, Cilano right in the beginning of her book claims that Pakistan, as represented by these writers, is a failed nation state. She asserts that, '...this book concludes with an argument advocating the end of national identities' (Cilano, 2013, p. 1). My research differs from Cilano's work on both these issues. Firstly by selecting a particular time period (1988-2009) and a specific number of writers (four), my research is much more focused on the relevant and recent issues than Cilano's work. Through my research I highlight these Pakistani writers' viewpoints on both indigenous and international crisis that Pakistan as a nation state faces today. Cilano, I argue, is wrong in interpreting the

concept of nationalism in the fiction of the Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers. These writers reject only that form of nationalism or nationalist discourse that legitimizes the use of violence or terror in the name of national security. Hamid, Shamsie and Hanif criticize USA for manipulating the Pakistani politicians and politics for their national gains and political agendas, leaving the Pakistani society on the verge of fragmentation. Contrary to Cilano's argument, I assert through my research that these writers use their fiction to present a progressive and moderate picture of Pakistan and Pakistani people to the rest of the world. Hence, my research argues that their target is not nationalism but rather any destructive form of nationalism and nationalist discourse.

Apart from the above mentioned two books, there are not many research papers providing a critical discussion about the Anglophone Pakistani fiction. And those which are available, they mostly discuss this body of work in a post-9/11 scenario, without contextualizing it in the military regime of General Zia. Contrary to Cilano's *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State* (2013), my research provides an additional dimension to the already existing literature as it not only discusses the Pakistani writers' work in a post-9/11 and post War on Terror context but it also situates and contextualizes the issue in the military regime of General Zia, the time period when the religious discourse was empowered and strengthened as a state policy. I believe that without taking this military rule into consideration, it is impossible to understand the mechanics, structures and underlying currents of religious extremism in Pakistan. Elleke Boehmer (2010) also

argues that, ‘By contrast with Anglo-American novelists [...] who regard terror as a force that cannot be incorporated within civic society, I would suggest that in the globalized world terror is a force that has been incorporated everywhere (Boehmer, 2010, p. 145). I further argue that in contrast to the US fiction which treats 9/11 as a break in civilization, the paracolonial fiction views the world as always inflicted with terror. Hence, instead of treating 9/11 or other such terrorist incidents as an end of civilization, the paracolonial fiction writers look to revisit and reinterpret them in their respective historical contexts.

In the light of above discussion, I strongly believe that it would be appropriate to situate the recently published paracolonial Pakistani fiction in the context of literary traditions of modernism and postmodernism as it shares many characteristics of these literary and aesthetic movements. Pakistani fiction produced during the last three decade emerged as a body of work with its distinct characteristics and deals with the socio-political and cultural issues recently confronted by the nation. Pakistani writers are keen to revisit their national history and deconstruct it, in order to explore the dark corridors of their past. Moreover in order to understand the post-9/11 situation in Pakistan, it is necessary to contextualize this fiction in General Zia’s military regime which helped in establishing and strengthening a plethora of militants in Pakistan. Therefore it would be a reasonable course to employ the analytical tools provided by postcolonialism and postmodernism in order to analyze the Anglophone Pakistani fiction and see how these writers question and explore the issues like national and political

identities, validity and reliability of national history, feminism, war, class divide and religious and ethnic discriminations in the Pakistani society.



### **Chapter 3: Revisiting the Peripheries in *Meatless Days*: Unveiling Gender and Religious Discourse in Pakistan**

Written during self-exile *Meatless Days* (1989) is a reflection on the discursive practices informed and supported by the agencies of religion and politics in the Pakistani society. This chapter explores how Suleri triangulates the issues of gender, religion and postcolonialism in her memoir and seeks whether she treats these three issues as intellectual constructs, lived realities or as an intersection of both. *Meatless Days* (1989), as a paracolonial text, is a narrative replete with ample examples from the political history of Pakistan, the role of religion in the country's politics, lives of the masses and the place of women in the society. The chapter further goes on to discuss how religion is (mis)used by the political elite of the country, as depicted in *Meatless Days* (1989), to compartmentalize and redefine the social hierarchy to fit its political goals. By revisiting the socio-political history of Pakistan, contextualized in the issues of gender and religion in a Third World postcolonial society, *Meatless Days* presents the possibility of reinterpretation and deconstruction of the historical and religious discourses and the way these were manipulated.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, Taliban's obtrusive implementation of rigid and misinterpreted version of Islamic laws and the destruction of girls' schools

in the northern areas of Pakistan and attempted assassination of a fourteen year old female education activist Malala Yousafzai have once again started a debate about the intersections of religion and gender leading to women's marginalization in the Pakistani society. Islam has been used as an influential political and social factor by the Pakistani rulers, both democratic and military, to legitimize, justify and prolong their rule. The religious discourse, imposed upon the Pakistani society, strengthened the male faction, rejected women as ineffective and deprived them of any tangible identity. The word 'women' has become synonymous with absence, deprived and dehumanized in the social strata of Pakistan. I argue through this chapter that Derrida's concept of 'catachresis' becomes relevant to describe this abysmal state of affairs for women as the country's religious and political discourse had a catachrestic influence on the Pakistani women.

This study has a particular significance for a country like Pakistan where religious discourse remains popular and women's role and responsibilities remain undefined and restricted. In this chapter I see how far Suleri reverses and displaces the narrative of the centre, challenges the discourse of the oppressor and uses Derrida's concept of catachresis as a strategic tool to highlight the displacement of women in the Pakistani society. Furthermore I also explore how Suleri uses the tales from her family's past to deconstruct the grand narrative of her nation's troubled political history. Suleri incorporates her family anecdotes in the *tour-de-history* of Pakistan and by constructing the two, parallel to each other she tries to make sense of the macro political structure of her country.

*Meatless Days*, written in geographical and temporal dislocation, is embedded with social and political connotations. The memoir records Suleri's protest against female subjugation through false, misconstrued and wrong interpretation of Islamic laws in the Pakistani society. Suleri, with most of her formative years in Pakistan, has interwoven the turbulent phase of her country with the reminiscences of tragic events in her family and tries to theorize the problematic issues of gender and religion in Pakistan as a Postcolonial nation. The memoir is significant, not just because it revisits this past but because of the writer's subjective effort to locate the past in her family's matrilineal line. She successfully retraces the ambivalent relationship between the troubled history of the newly born nation she belonged to and the family she was a member of. Interestingly she does not opt for a chronological journey for revisiting her family and country's past through *Meatless Days* (1989). Instead, she intentionally blurs the boundaries between past and present as her narrative keeps oscillating between different time zones. Suleri, as a paracolonial writer, makes use of this ever-shifting time, continuously oscillating between past and present, to foreground suppressive socio-political culture and a forged and manipulated historical version of Pakistan's past. Ray (1993) argues:

Sara Suleri's anecdotal record of her experiences consistently overcomes the boundaries drawn by the 'now' and 'then' and 'here' and 'there' of a linear, spatially demarcated, autobiographical recounting of the events in one's life.

(Ray, 1993, p. 48)

By doing so, Suleri succeeds in blending many apparently disjointed and de-contextualized tales from her past and tries to rationalize the national history of

Pakistan. She further strengthens her view point by stressing that the national history of Pakistan is filled with so many inauspicious dark spaces that it constantly needs re-writing, re-visiting and remembering. These gaps in the macro-political history of Pakistan can only be addressed by situating them in the micro-narratives of the individuals.

Being the daughter of an eminent Pakistani journalist Z.A. Suleri<sup>22</sup> (Ziauddin Ahmad Suleri; 1913-1999), Sara Suleri was exposed to the political upheavals in the Pakistani society. The apocalyptic trauma of early post-independence days and the disturbed life of the writer and her family are highlighted in *Meatless Days*. The macro structure of political life of Pakistan has a direct influence on the micro structure of individual lives. Both the spheres, personal and political, are intertwined in such a manner in this highly creative handling of history, politics, and personal narrative that interpreting them separately becomes almost impossible. Ray (1993) further argues that, ‘Suleri’s memoir constantly imbricates her family in the reconstruction of the nation of Pakistan so that the gap between the micro-political and the macro-political is continuously collapsed’ (Ray, 1993, p. 49). It is the

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<sup>22</sup>Z. A. Suleri had written a number of books on politics of the subcontinent before and after the partition, Islam as a dominating religion in the world and in support of various military dictators in Pakistan. Being a notable Pakistani journalist he has also written a large number editorials and columns in the newspapers. His books include *The Road to Peace and Pakistan* (Lahore: Sheikh Mohammad Ashraf, 1946); *My Leader, being an estimate of Mr. Jinnah’s work for Indian Mussalmans* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946); *Pakistan’s Lost Years* (Lahore: Feroze Sons, 1962); *Politicians and Ayub: Being a Survey of Pakistani Politics from 1948-1964* (Rawalpindi: Capital Law and General Law Book Depot, 1964); *Masla-i-Afghanistan* (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1981); *Al-Quran* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1989); *Shaheed-E-Millat Liaqat Ali Khan, Builder of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1990); *Influence of Islam on World Civilization* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1994).

biography not only of a family but of a country going through the throes of political turmoil.

In *Meatless Days* (1989) Suleri attempts to re-narrate the history of Pakistan and the Pakistani nation, to locate the gaps left unattended hitherto and to challenge the established historical narratives emerging from Pakistan. This is not a problem faced by Pakistan or the Pakistani nation only but almost all the postcolonial nations felt the need to revisit and probe into their early post-independence history as many literary writers tried to deal with this issue through their writings. Boehmer comments:

Many more postcolonial narratives...have plots which are based on history. Especially in the early post-independence era, this was the history concerned with the colonial times, the build-up to independence and its immediate aftermath.

(Boehmer, 2005, p. 187)

Walder (2005) also insists on the need of continuous revision of history as, 'the real human dimension can only be read through a sense of history, which is a form of collective memory, continually revised' (Walder, 2005, p. 190). For this purpose Suleri consciously intertwines the histories of individuals with that of her country for an individual is an extension of the social and cultural milieu. The attempts to understand one sphere without taking the other into account invites the risk of incomplete and incorrect explanations. Lovesey (1997) in *Postcolonial Self-Fashioning in Suleri Suleri's Meatless Days* argues:

The individual does not feel herself to exist outside of interdependent existence that assert its rhythms everywhere in the community...(where) lives are so thoroughly entangled that each of them has its centre everywhere and

its circumference nowhere. The important unit is thus never the isolated being.

(Lovesey, 1997, p. 36)

The reasons of one event happening on any of the two levels and its impacts are necessarily rooted in the other. This parallel and simultaneous coexistence of both the levels, personal and political, creates an impact of retrospection. Lovesey (1997) further comments on Suleri's narrative style and her merging of political and personal tales in *Meatless Days*:

Transmogrification or dream like transformation of personal and collective history – the story of self, family and nation in Pakistan where 'change was all there was' (p. 18) – is the central organizing trope of *Meatless Days*, and draws together its discursive negotiations with autobiography and history, and underlies its status as metaautobiography and metahistory.

(Lovesey, 1997, p. 43)

For Lovesey details from the past of Suleri, her family's life and history of Pakistan go parallel in her tale and formulate the intrinsic underlying structure of the memoir. *Meatless Days* is divided into nine chapters with anecdotes from Suleri's family life and the political history of Pakistan. Suleri keeps on oscillating between past and present and avoids any chronological sequence in her tales. Her narration of reminiscences is as disorderly and fluid as is the political history of her country. She disturbs the boundaries between 'now' and 'then' and 'here' and 'there' and keeps moving to and fro both in time and space. I argue that as a paracolonial writer, Suleri problematizes the issue of national history. By incorporating the many mini-narratives into the larger meta-narrative of national history she attempts to re-appropriate it and question its legitimacy.

Suleri's life during her self-willed exile made her understanding of her past quite complicated as is evident in the complex structure of her writings. She rejects a traditional linear and chronological narration of many anecdotes in her memoir by intermingling apparently disjointed episodes with each other in such a manner that their placement in the text is overlapping. Time for Suleri is a non-static entity and she constructs her narrative by moving from one kind of time into the next one. Her characters live through multiple temporal modes as she employs the lived time of daily existence, of memory (personal and public), dreaming and that of our unconscious repressed thoughts. She goes on to measure the past of her nation from alternative yardsticks, for example the lives of common individuals instead of a timeline study of major political events from the history of her country. Suleri intermingles various incidents from the lives of the individuals with the major episodes from the politics of her country which denies a simple description of events; rather this intermingling is a lot more suggestive in nature and implies many questions.

Suleri believes that it is impossible to make an attempt to rewrite the history of her nation by simply discussing the major political calamities or the events of national and historical significance. Individuals, with their existence rooted in the family ties and their social roles build up a nation. Various political episodes or incidents affect the family lives and thought patterns and therefore cannot be ignored from the study of any nation's past and history. Hence Suleri incorporates tales from her family life in order to synthesize and understand the greater and larger political

context of Pakistan in *Meatless Days* (1989). In *Meatless Days* the personal and political run parallel to each other. While discussing the partition of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Suleri blames Mohammad Ali Jinnah<sup>23</sup>, the founding father of Pakistan, of deceiving the Muslims of the subcontinent by singlehandedly deciding their fate which resulted in the bloodshed at the time of partition. Parallel to this political mishandling, her father tried to control everybody within the household and subjugated women in particular because of his domineering and authoritative personality. Suleri further goes on to mark various military regimes in Pakistan through the names of different family cooks. She intentionally uses the act of cooking to describe the Pakistani politics in order to point out the ever brewing conspiracies. Ray (1993), on this narrative strategy of describing various rulers of Pakistan through the names of the cooks, argues that Suleri:

[...] traces the passage of history vis-à-vis the different cooks that paraded through the kitchens of Suleri household. The easy reference to ‘the Quayyum days’ of ‘the Allah Ditta era’ definitely make the reader aware of the relativity comfortable existence of the Suleri family. But the manner in which the two – the leaders of the nation and the cooks working for the Suleris – are jarringly yoked together suggests the impossibility of the existence of the one without the other.

(Ray, 1993, p. 50)

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<sup>23</sup>For a study of Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s personality and politics see Sharif-ul-Mujahid, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1981); Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press; 1984); Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Saad R. Khairi, *Jinnah Reinterpreted: The Journey from Indian Nationalism to Muslim Statehood* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ian Byrant Wells, *Ambassador of Hindu Muslim Unity: Jinnah’s Early Politics* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2995).



Furthermore, a prime minister's death marked by her grandmother's death and a dictator's efforts to Islamize the whole Pakistani society paralleled with her, hitherto liberal, father's conversion to Islam are some of the examples where Suleri has tried to merge the personal with the political to highlight the impacts of the larger political context on the lives of Pakistani people. Political catastrophes are marked by personal loss and unfortunately it's the women mostly who have to suffer in the patriarchal Pakistani society, even when the state decides to religiously radicalize the whole country.

*Meatless Days* opens with a sense of loss and feeling of absence. For Suleri leaving Pakistan was like 'giving up the company of women' (Suleri, 1989, p. 1). These feelings of absence and loss frustrate Suleri. For her, Pakistan was a place that never promised an easy breathing space for women and reduced them to a subdued community in the society. On the very first page of *Meatless Days* she claims:

My reference is to a place where the concept of a woman was not really part of an available vocabulary: we were too busy for that, just living, and conducting precise negotiations with what it meant to be a sister or a child or a wife or a mother or a servant.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 1)

In Pakistan, women's biological roles define their identity which is either dependant on or subservient to their male counterparts. The use of the pronoun 'we' in this quote refers to all the determining and defining factions of a society, familial, religious and political as well, which failed to determine a respectable position for women in Pakistan. *Meatless Days* gives a voice to Suleri's dissatisfaction with the social structure of her country for denying its women any space or significance. She

decides to reverse this situation in her memoir by giving a lot more space to female characters as compared to the male ones. Four chapters out of a total of nine are named after women and rest of the five chapters also tell many tales and carry many anecdotes from the lives of the women close to her.

Each female character in *Meatless Days* reflects upon the national scenario through her own lens but none of them seem satisfied with the scheme of things in the socio-political milieu of the country. The frustration of these characters is evident throughout the memoir but more important is the fact that the prospects of finding any means of catharsis are remote. They feel suppressed and suffocated. All of them have their own ways to live with the realities of ever increasing external pressures and frustration. Suleri's mother always seemed lost, absorbed and always succumbing to her husband by saying 'what an excellent thing' in response to every query. Her grandmother found solace in food which became the only way for her to communicate with her son and family. Suleri's sister, *Ifat* was always biting her lips, showing her frustration and inability to survive in the male dominant society of Pakistan. All the female characters in the memoir are dominated by the male members of the household. Identity crisis for women is a recurrent issue in the memoir and they struggle throughout their lives to gain their due status and space in the Pakistani society.

Female identity in Pakistan is very much interlinked with the place of Islam in the socio-political structures of the country. The idea of Pakistan, translated as the 'land of the pure', was first conceived and later realized in the name of Islam. The

Pakistani society presents an attempt to create a blend of religious fundamentalism with the state where basic Islamic principles are an integral part not only of state laws but also of the development of civil society. The place of Islam in the social and political layers of the country had been an issue ever since the creation of Pakistan, the only country in the world that was founded on the basis of religious ideology. Islam was the major reason and the driving force in the unity of the Muslims of the subcontinent and rationalized their movement and struggle for independence. It was religion which engendered the 'two nation theory' and became the main reason for the emergence of the 'Muslim nationhood' in the subcontinent that subsequently led to the creation of Pakistan. After independence, Islam was immediately pushed to the background by other issues in Pakistan. Islam which was thought to be the determining factor in various matters, like making the constitution and laying out the social and cultural infrastructure of the country, was continuously overlooked by the policy makers. The place of Islam in the country's constitution and its role in politics remained undecided for quite a long period of time after 1947 adding to the already prevailing atmosphere of political chaos, stagnation and uncertainty. Z. A. Suleri (1962) in *Pakistan's Lost Years* comments:

Three factors bedeviled Pakistan's national life: continued preoccupation with constitution-making and the suspense caused thereby; stalemate and stagnation in the political process and lastly confusion and uncertainty in assigning the place of Islam in the country's polity. Islam was involved both in constitution-making and party politics.  
(Suleri, 1962, p. 3)

Islam as a religious ideology has been exploited by the political leaders of Pakistan to hoodwink the masses. This uncertainty regarding the status of religion on

the national level also got replicated on the social and individual scale. Almond (2007) also endorses Suleri's case when he summarizes Rushdie's views about Islam's political position in Pakistan:

Rushdie in novels such as *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, often observes how Islam is invoked to facilitate the nationalisms proclaimed by the newly born states of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Whether it is Commanders-in-Chief who quote the Quran, descriptions of Pakistan as 'Al-Lah's new country' (*Shame*, p. 69), Quranic promises of paradise and virgin *houris* to would-be war heroes or the Karachi TV chief who considers 'pork' to be a 'four-letter word' (*ibid.*, p. 70), Rushdie deftly delineates and comments upon the various hypocrisies involved when nation-states employ the faith of their peoples to justify and colour their own self-seeking policies.

(Almond, 2007, pp. 100-101)

Suleri questions the influence of religion and religious discourse in defining almost everything in the social and political structure of Pakistan and further tries to highlight how it marginalized the women in the country. Jane Tompkins (1987) also asserts that men suppress women allowing them very little or no space and voice in the socio-political and economic issues of the society. They determine what it means to be a woman. They make her devoiced, devalued and a non-significant other. She claims:

What enrages me is the way women are used as extensions of men, mirrors of men, devices for showing men off, devices for helping men get what they want: They are never there in their own right, or rarely. The world of the Western contains no women. Sometimes I think *the world* contains no women.

(Tompkins, 1987, p. 173)

This misuse of Islam has had a catachrestic influence on the identity of the women. The version of Islam imposed upon the Pakistani society, by General Zia,

further strengthened the concept that women's role in the social structure of the country was ineffective. By categorizing them through the master word 'women', they are deprived of their individual identity and existence. Suleri's protest regarding the tactical marginalization of women in the Pakistani society is best understood through Derrida and Spivak's ideas about catachresis. The term catachresis emerges from the Greek word *katakhresthai* meaning 'to misuse' either by mistake or for some rhetorical effect. Suleri argues that religious discourse has been exploited and misused by the political elite of Pakistan to suppress women. Derrida defines Catachresis as:

...the violent and forced abusive inscription of a sign, the imposition of a sign upon a meaning which did not yet have its own proper sign in language. So much so that there is no substitution here, no transport of proper signs, but rather the eruptive extension of a sign proper to an idea, a meaning, deprived of their signifier. A 'secondary' original.

(Derrida, 1982, p. 255)

Catachresis for Derrida is more of an impropriety, something that, in spite of being a fake, replaces the original. Spivak, on the other hand, describes Catachresis as a framework which tries at, 'reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value coding' (Spivak, 1990, p. 228) and further condemns the use of master words to misrepresent those they claim to represent. Catachresis carries a latent but an inherently exploitative nature. In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, where women's identity is reduced to their duties or defined through their physical appearance, they are made to let go of any progressive social role or outlook. It is interesting to note that the feminist discourse of Suleri, Shamsie and even Hanif uses female body to highlight the injustices done to women in Pakistan. Suleri argues that women's

identity in Pakistan is based upon their biological and bodily roles. Shamsie's female protagonist suffers from three bird shaped burn marks on her body as a reminder of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki in 1945 and Alice's twenty seven year old body in Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is 'a compact like war zone where competing warriors have trampled and left their marks' (Hanif, 2011, p. 96). In the Anglophone Pakistani fiction, female body is a space where disputes among men are settled. These female protagonists' faceless characterization in the Pakistani fiction highlights the catachrestic nature of their existence as it deprives them of any meaningful and distinct identity. All the women are recognized and defined through the same body and similar roles. A woman's individual existence differentiating her from others as a rational and sensible person becomes an impossibility in such a society where she is expected to act like an ideal model of a 'true woman'. Spivak claims in this regard:

Master words are catachresis [...] that there are no literal referents, there are no 'true' examples of the 'true worker', the 'true woman', the 'true proletarian' who would actually stand for the ideals in terms of which you have mobilized.  
(Spivak, 1990, p. 104)

Hence, Suleri and Shamsie's feminist discourse situates their female protagonists in a society that resists accepting a woman willing to make rational choices for herself. The religio-political and cultural discourses in Pakistan claim to draw a true picture of a woman which according to Spivak (1990) is not possible. The discourse of political movements (mis)uses master or abstract words to describe histories, experiences and struggles of the subdued and suppressed groups and communities

such as women, workers or colonized and by doing so tends to marginalize them further.

In *Meatless Days* the master word 'women' has no literal referent rather it only casts an abusive effect on the lives and experiences of those whom it claims to define. Calling them women does not give them an identity rather its catachrestic nature further relegates them to an abyss of non-existence. Moreover, viewing them only as the extensions of their roles in the family does not do justice to their existence and identity rather it only highlights the incompleteness embedded in the meaning of this word. Spivak further argues:

The political claims that are most urgent in decolonized space are tacitly recognized as coded within the legacy of imperialism: nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, even culturalism...They're being reclaimed, indeed claimed, as a concept-metaphor for which no historically adequate referent may be advanced from postcolonial space, yet that does not make the claim less important. A concept-metaphor without an adequate referent is a catachresis.

(Spivak, 1990, p. 225)

The intersections of gender and religion in a postcolonial society had been a significant area of interest for feminist researchers who raised their voices against the subjugation of women on the basis of biological differences. Loomba (1998) comments that: 'many postcolonial regimes have been out rightly repressive of women's rights, using religion as the basis on which to enforce their subordination' (Loomba, 1998, p. 189). Nayar also points out that, 'often – and this applies to Hindi, Christian and Muslim societies – religious doctrines and theology were deployed to justify unequal gender relations and unfair social structures' (Nayar, 2008, p. 142).

Suleri as a paracolonial Pakistani writer tries to highlight how a constructed religious discourse facilitates the patriarchal social structures, supports the domination of men in and outside their homes and diminishes any chances of social emancipation for the Pakistani women. Pakistani society, Suleri believes, has also used Islam to reduce women to roles simply based upon their physical appearance ameliorating the male domination and supremacy. She comments:

[...] we naturally thought of ourselves as women, but only in some perfunctory biological way that we happened on perchance. Or else it was a hugely practical joke, we thought, hidden somewhere among our clothes. But formulating that definition is about as impossible as attempting to locate the luminous qualities of an Islamic landscape.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 2)

Suleri in her postmodernist prose style goes a step further by blending the history of Pakistan with the issue of gender. Through the parallel existence of history and gender she is successful in creating an imaginary space where she combines the events of national significance with those of family, both happening at the same time and both explaining and accounting each other. Sandra Ponzanesi discusses this ambivalent relationship of gender and history in Suleri's memoir as,

It is the symbiotic relationship that links the female memory to the historical experience of nationhood. Borders cannot be located outside the body; neither is it possible to fix them in conventional writings. Suleri escapes not only the problem of essentialism by not giving a definition of the self, but she also dismantles a concept of nation that is based on a chronological notion of time. The nation is made by the recollection of the self and of other women, which can only happen through a situated view in time/space/body. The nation is, therefore, subject to constant re-membering, re-writing, and revision.

(Ponzanesi, 2004, p. 77)



I argue through this chapter that Suleri, as a paracolonial Pakistani writer, resists the patriarchal Pakistani structures, firstly, by reinterpreting and revisiting the national past through the lives of the women of her family and secondly by creating an imaginary space where she dismantles the borders that confine Pakistani women to their socially, religiously and culturally constructed roles. What appear to be retrospective tales of the women from their life at the first look, turn out to be highly penetrating episodes carrying much connotative and symbolic meaning and serve as the referring parallels to the crucial events from the history of Pakistan.

In spite of women being a majority in Pakistan and Islam being present in every affair of the country, finding a definition for both remained a mystery to Suleri. Failing to find any respectable space for herself in the household or the society Suleri, along with her sisters, looks for alternate options. Ray (1993) comments:

The desire to reinvent their lives rather than wait around to have them redirected by the changes going on around them motivates the sisters to act. Tillat gets married, moves to Kuwait and Sara journeys on to USA. But this desire on Sara's part initiates a separation from her community of women, a connection she consistently seeks to reestablish by privileging the presence of her grandmother, mother, sisters, and friends in a textual celebration of a hegemonic heterogeneity.

(Ray, 1993, p. 52)

Suleri, failing to cope with the suppressive and patriarchal Pakistani society, looks for alternate options and leaves for USA. Through *Meatless Days* she tries to build an imaginary space, an extra-subjective or cosmic time<sup>24</sup> where she

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<sup>24</sup> Julia Kristeva in her much debated essay *Women's Time* has discussed the totalizing concept of women that is defined through a cyclic and non-linear time. She argues:

could tell the otherwise subdued and forgotten tales not only of the women from her family but also from the history of her country. Kruckles in her article '*Men live in Homes, Women live in Bodies*': *Body and Gender in Sara Suleri's Meatless Days* argues how the idea of female body is forced upon women by male members of the household and the society that it reduces and restricts them merely to their roles in the family, making them vulnerable to male violence. In a patriarchal society like Pakistan, female images are constructed on the basis of their physical characteristics and roles where 'mothers are nurturing, sisters sensual and fathers are the phallic bodies' (Kruckles, 2006, p. 173).

Mair Jones, Suleri's mother, is one of the many displaced and marginalized women in the memoir. A Welsh lady by birth, wed to Mr. Z. A. Suleri and settled in Pakistan, she found herself displaced while being in Lahore and trying to be part of a nation whose memories of a sour colonial past were still fresh and made her feel an outsider. In spite of her continuous efforts to become part of Pakistani society she was always looked upon with the suspicion and doubt which the once colonized Pakistani nation reserved for a woman belonging to a colonizer race. Suleri writes:

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On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock, but whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertiginous visions and unnamable jouissance. On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word "temporality" hardly fits.

(Kristeva, 1986, p. 14)

For a detailed study please see Kristeva, J. (1986) 'Women's Time' in Toril, M. (ed.) *The Kristeva Reader*. pp. 118-123.

The touching good faith of her Pakistani passport could hardly change the fact that even as my mother thought she was arriving, she actually had returned. There were centuries' worth of mistrust of English women in their eyes when they looked at her who chose to come after the English should have been gone: what did she mean by saying. 'I wish to be part of you?' Perhaps, they feared, she mocked.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 163)

Her role in the family was also determined as that of an 'other'. Her character is set in contrast to Mr. Suleri, her husband, who being a man of authority and dominance throughout the memoir enjoys absolute control not only over her but the whole family. Mair Jones lived in subservience to Mr. Suleri, not as his life partner. Suleri claims that, 'Papa's powerful discourse would surround her night and day – when I see her in his room, she is always looking down, gravely listening' (Suleri, 1989, p. 157). Moreover her identity for most of the part of the memoir is determined and defined through her responsibilities as a wife or mother. Mair Jones' place in the Suleri family confirms the fact that men in patriarchal societies not only reduce women to mere physicality but also to machines of reproduction and nurturing their offspring. Nayar comments:

Women's literature from South Asia, Africa, South USA, and Africans in the USA see themselves as situated at the intersection of three repressive discourses and structures: racism, imperialism and sexism...Sexism, at the hands of an oppressive patriarchy even in native societies, reduced them to machines of reproduction and labour.

(Nayar, 2008, p. 120)

Even Suleri herself, throughout the *Meatless Days*, calls her mother 'Mamma' and not as Mair Jones or *Surrayya Suleri* (the Islamic name given to her after her marriage with Z. A. Suleri) with few exceptions. She is neither Mair nor

Surraya but mamma, representing her role and duties only. Mair Jones achieved a fluid equilibrium between 'syntax' and 'name', between social interactions and individuality. This continuous realization of being an outcast and an 'other' and not belonging to the Pakistani nation makes her resign her claims to an individual identity or her deserved space both in the family and society as well. Suleri laments:

She learned to live apart, then-apart even from herself-growing into that curiously powerful disinterest in owing, in belonging, which years later would make her so clearly tell her children, 'Child, I will not grip.' She let commitment and belonging become my father's domain, learning instead the way of walking with tact on other people's land.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 164)

Her linguistic inability further marginalizes her in the society. Being Welsh it becomes difficult for her to communicate with her grandchildren in English even because of their upbringing in Pakistan and an excessive exposure to Urdu. Ultimately she finds herself, unconsciously, adopting the role of a typical subdued and less privileged Pakistani family woman by accepting her fate and resigning quietly to her private self. Suleri was a witness to her mother's alienation and resignation which has haunted her since. Her mother's failure to find the expected energy of a newly liberated nation, her inability to bring about any change in her husband's thinking in spite of her repeated efforts and the impossibility of adjusting herself in a nation of multifarious histories and languages made her acquiesce to silence.

Suleri's sister also had to pay a heavy price for being a female in a patriarchal Pakistan. She was a combination of grace, arrogance and self-will like her father but was always noticed because of her physical grace and beauty. She was disowned by

Mr. Suleri for being strong and rebellious as she preferred to disregard her father's authority and marry a person of her own choice:

She chose to enter into the heart of Pakistan in the most un-Pakistan way possible: she ran away from Kinnaird and called home a few days later to say, bravely, 'Papa, I am married.' 'Congratulations' he replied, put down the phone, and refused to utter her name again for years.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 141)

Running away from her home, ruled and governed by her father, and marrying a person of her choice did not bring freedom and emancipation for her. She had to succumb to the authority of her husband instead of her father. It was the men who ruled the household in Pakistan. In order to live with her husband's family she had to accept, internalize a new set of rules and become a part of an alien and strange world. Suleri spoke of this change in her life:

What energies my sister devoted to Pakistan! First she learned how to speak Punjabi and then graduated to the Jehlum dialect, spoken in the region from which Javed's family came. She taught herself the names and stations of hundred-odd relations, intuiting how each of them would wish to be addressed. She learned more than I will ever know about the history of the army and then she turned to polo's ins and outs.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 141)

*Ifat*, while talking to Suleri about the jeopardy that women have to face in Pakistan, once said that, 'it doesn't matter Sara [...]. Men live in homes, and women live in bodies' (Suleri, 1989, p. 143). Suleri is very explicit in summing up her whole feminist discourse in one sentence. In most of the Third World societies, women are objectified as sex objects to be viewed and desired. Social rules and conventions interpret them through their biological functions and define them as child-bearing machines. Men have everything to own and govern whereas women are restricted

only to one thing they possess, their body. Unfortunately this sole possession is also continuously subjected to physical, verbal and all other forms of oppressions and atrocities by the domineering male members of the society.

The country, founded in the name of Islam and its society being very proudly vocal of the fact, fails to convince Suleri of its true Islamic characteristics. Similarly various female characters in *Meatless Days* respond differently to the issue of religion on different occasions in their lives. Suleri's grandmother, who is devout, is always the one in the family who imprecates Satan, loves God, converses with Him and gives uninvited sermons, of her own, to the people on the road. She is meticulous and eccentric in the performance of her religious rituals. Suleri observes her religious eccentricities:

In the winter I see her alone, painstakingly dragging her straw mat out to the courtyard at the back of the house and following the rich course of the afternoon sun. With her would go her Quran, a metal basin in which she could wash her hands, and her ridiculously heavy spouted water pot, that was made of brass. None of us, according to Dadi, were quite pure enough to transport these particular items.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 6)

In April, following the trying times of 1971 and separation of the eastern wing of Pakistan<sup>25</sup> into Bangladesh, she suffers from severe burns while making tea in the kitchen one night and undergoes not just physical but spiritual transformation

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<sup>25</sup> Scores of books have analyzed the circumstances of the breakup of Pakistan in 1971. Historians and writers of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan have their own versions of origins and events of the disintegration of Pakistan. For an Indian account of events see Lt. Gen. JFR Jacob, *Surrender at Dacca* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997); for a Bengali viewpoint see A. M. A. Mohit, *Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation* (Dacca: Bangladesh Books International, 1978); for Pakistani version see Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, *The Betrayal of East Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), for a balanced analysis of event see Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan India and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

as she ‘left her long kept friend God and forgot to pray’ (Suleri, 1989, p. 15). The metamorphoses that the grandmother undergoes happens at the time when Pakistan was about to witness a major change in the course of its history; Islamization of Pakistan. General Zia-ul-Haq announced the third martial law in the country on 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1977 and took refuge in Islam to perpetuate his rule. General Zia’s efforts to base the legal system of Pakistan on the Islamic laws were an attempt to gain political benefits. He announced *Hudud Ordinance*<sup>26</sup> and many other punitive laws based upon the basic Islamic principles and decreed a ban on many major cultural activities, including music and theatrical performances. Many such laws, particularly *Hudud Ordinance* were misused against women who were prosecuted and punished for adultery even when they were victims of rape. Islam, previously in homes and mosques, came out into the streets of Pakistan. Religious groups and organizations were empowered by Zia and served as a tool in perpetuating his rule. Suleri witnessed this religious maneuvering of the nation and comments:

We dimly knew we were about to witness Islam’s departure from the land of Pakistan. The men would take it to the streets and make it vociferate, but the great romance between religion and the populace, the embrace that engendered Pakistan, was done.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 15)

Suleri was afraid that religion would be misused as a tool of social and political power. She could see how the military dictator was using religion as a tool

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<sup>26</sup> For a study of working and impact of Hudud Ordinance see Tahir Wasti, *The Application of Islamic Criminal Law in Pakistan* (Lieden: Brill, 2009); Charles H. Kennedy, “Islamization in Pakistan: Implementation of the Hudud Ordinance”, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 96, No. 2 (2006); Martin Lau, “Twenty Five Years of Hudud Ordinances-A Review”, *Washington & Lee Law Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (2008).

to strengthen his rule in the country by strengthening the religious groups and introducing Islamic laws in the country. Suleri had foreseen that this practice would only result in the rise of religious extremism and would ultimately lead to social and ethnic divide. Mr. Z. A. Suleri, the most influential and authoritative person in the home, also underwent a complete change from being secular to religious, during General Zia's Islamization campaign. Mr. Suleri, who had never shown any religious inclination at any point in his life, started to pray and Suleri's grandmother who had always claimed God to be her best friend suddenly stopped praying. Suleri recalls:

That was a change, when Dadi patched herself together again and forgot to put prayer back into its proper pocket, for God could now leave the home and soon would join the government. Papa prayed and fasted and went on pilgrimage and read the Quran aloud with most peculiar locutions.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 15)

The transformation of Suleri's father and grandmother is symbolic of the fact that Islam, in General Zia's era, was not meant to be women's aide, but it was men's possession to be exploited and politicized. Suleri openly expressed her disgust for General Zia for turning the Pakistani people into patriarchal religious fanatics and throughout the memoir calls him not by his real name but as 'General Zulu'.<sup>27</sup> The General brought Islam to the streets, made it the property of the masculine and politicized it to ensure his prolonged dictatorship. Also commenting on General Zia's Islamization of the Pakistani society Rushdie is of the view that:

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<sup>27</sup> General Zulu is the derogatory name that Suleri uses recurrently in *Meatless Days* to show her contempt and hatred for the ex-president and the third Chief Martial Law administrator of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq.



so-called Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people who respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. This is how religion shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which people are reluctant to see, discredited, disenfranchised, mocked.

(Rushdie, 1995, p. 251)

General Zia’s rhetoric of Islam empowered the masculine both in the homes and the social ethos of the country. Women were silenced and suppressed and the true essence of their existence was further lost. Calling women, ‘women’, in the Pakistani society, does not give them an identity but only means to restrict them to their bodies and roles assigned by the religion. Suleri could not find any respectable identity for women in the Pakistani society, apart from that of a hugely practical joke. Women are an absence in Pakistan for Suleri and the only female characters in her memoir are either members of her family or close friends.

*Meatless Days* is overt in highlighting Pakistani or Third World women as a silenced community. They have always been directed by the dominating male members in their families who use Islam, the God’s word, to govern, monitor, silence, suppress and marginalize them. Ray further endorses the fact that, ‘it appears that in modern Pakistan, women can be conveniently silenced or easily replaced, being just another wife, mother, or daughter’ (Ray, 1993, p. 54). Women’s existence is so subdued and marginalized in the Pakistani community that their presence becomes meaningless. By situating the tales of women in her text, Suleri as a paracolonial writer explores how the (mis)use of religious discursive practices led to the stereotyping of women and how this stereotyping became a part of the social

structure. Suleri's interpretation of paracolonialism further points out how by creating a nexus between religion and politics a dictator was able to restructure the social strata of his country. It is significant to note that the paracolonial Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers, selected for this research, criticize the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq as a dark episode in the history of the country. Hanif in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and Shamsie in *Burnt Shadows* have also discussed the Zia regime and hold him responsible for the rise of religious extremism in the society. Suleri is first of these writers to discuss and analyze that era disapprovingly and raises serious concerns about the rise in religious frenzy during that era. Women suffered the most during the process as religion and politics joined hands and empowered the men, not just within the homes but virtually everywhere in the society. Women's contribution in any phenomenon of social or national development was ruled out and they were simply limited to their household roles. This denial of any space or roles for the women in the Pakistani society eliminated any chances of their progressive role and made them an outcast. By presenting the deprived and manipulated women in the Pakistani society, Suleri demands that the social, political and religious discourse, intentionally used to marginalize women in Pakistan, should be revisited, redefined and restructured.

#### **Chapter 4: *Burnt Shadows*: A Narrative of Troubled (Hi)stories**

*Burnt Shadows* (2009) deconstructs, decentres and challenges the popular post-9/11 Western discourse and presents a counter narrative to initiate a dialogue between the West and the Islamic world. Like many other Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers Shamsie, with her formative years in Pakistan, has spent most of her life divided in Pakistan, UK and USA. Living as a member of the Pakistani Diaspora community in UK, she writes in a third space by situating herself physically in the West and writing about the land, nation and culture she was born and raised in. Being in this third space allows Shamsie not only to experiment, review and comment on the issues concerning her nation but also to benefit from the common ground that comes into existence as a result of her encounter with the Western world. Because of her hybridized status (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2) and her being continuously exposed to the hegemonic discourse of the West, Shamsie enjoys a vantage point from which she can not only deconstruct it with authority but it also allows her to create a counter-narrative challenging the unilateral and hegemonic Western media and political discourse. Gauhar Khan (2011) in *The Hideous Beauty of Bird-Shaped Burns: Transnational Allegory and Feminist Rhetoric in Kamila Shamsie's Burnt Shadows* contextualizes the novel in a post-9/11 world where feminist Muslim postcolonial writers are struggling with issues like home, nation and identity and

argues that, 'Pakistani women writers profess their mode of writing to be a stabilizing and emancipating process, whereby geographies, histories, nations, races and genders are reconciled' (Khan, 2011, p. 54). She considers *Burnt Shadows* (2009) a fine example of the 'empire writing back' as it is a novel which is 'written in the centre for the centre' (Khan, 2011, p. 55). Shamsie deconstructs the nationalist rhetoric through her protagonist's journey during the various phases of state violence triggered as an aftermath of their capitalist policies.

As argued earlier, Shamsie writes *Burnt Shadows* (2009) from a hybridized third space, which unfolds the journey of a Japanese woman, Hiroko Tanaka, who travels through many lands and cultures and witnesses different civilizations in clash with each other. The novel begins with the atomic bombing of Nagasaki in 1945 and ends in post 9/11 USA; exploring the city of Delhi under the British colonial raj, Afghanistan during and after the Soviet military invasion, Karachi during General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law regime, Islamization and rising religious extremism in Pakistan, its impact on the West and the resultant reactions and responses. Being a paracolonial narrative, *Burnt Shadows* is about belonging, uprooting, suffering and healing and finding means of peaceful existence in today's geographically and ideologically divided world. The journey of Hiroko Tanaka, and various other characters, through these historical periods and places further explores the possibility of different civilizations coming into contact with each other, or creating a 'transnational zone' (Apter, 2011, p. 19), and individuals living together under the burdens of their histories, personal and political both.

The novel is divided into four parts with each part foregrounding specific time periods from history. The first part is about the bombing of Nagasaki in August 1945, the second part is set in Delhi of 1947 with the end of the British raj in India, the third part moves into Karachi during the 1980s describing the rise of Islamization in Pakistan and the last part is set in the post-9/11 New York and Afghanistan. Each part narrates the life of two families, one from the East and the other from the West, with intertwined stories of their interpersonal relationships. Each part explores the violent and military actions of legitimate governments to maintain and strengthen their supremacy during various periods of history and how these actions have affected the lives of common people. Mainly it's Hiroko's journey through time and space which connects all four parts to each other. She becomes the lens through which we come to know of the suffering and loss brought to many individuals' lives as a result of these legitimized and institutionalized acts of violence and atrocities. The first three parts of the novel open up many story lines with the introduction of many characters whereas the last part wraps up everything, connects storylines and fills in the blanks. The novel suggests the fact that the whole world shares a common history with the same patterns and cycles of destruction, which connects the members of various nations with each other. *Burnt Shadows* is an attempt to explore these destructive cycles through a revision of the human history.

The reliability of historical narratives and the possibility of its truthful representation are contentious issues, dealt with differently by different theorists. Dennis Walder insists on the need of continuous revision of history as, 'the real

human dimension can only be read through a sense of history, which is a form of collective memory, continually revised' (Walder, 2005, p. 190). The postmodernists, on the other hand, challenge the possibility of an objective and unbiased account of the past as Ermarth (1992) argues:

There is *only subjectivity*. There are *only* illusions. And every illusion, because it has no permanently objectifying frame, constitutes reality and hence is totally 'objective' for its duration.

(Ermarth, 1992, p. 111)

Nietzsche goes a step further when he highlights many barriers that exist between language and truth and hence claims that, 'Not only can language not represent reality but also the attempt to do so [...] serves hegemony' (Nietzsche, 2005, p. 47). The idea that history is a constructed discourse, through language, to serve hegemony undermines its ability to represent the 'real' past. Moreover as a linguistically manoeuvred discourse, history gives power to the dominant society to interpret past and hence the ability to control the present. Keeping in mind this poststructuralist critique of the possibility of an objective past, Linda Hutcheon's (1988) term 'historiographic metafiction' becomes significant as she argues:

Historiographic metafictional texts [...] both recount historically real events and administer a denaturalizing critique of them (*Politics of Postmodernism* 3), reminding the reader of the subjective, ideological, and linguistic contributors to the historical text's constructedness.

(Hutcheon, 1988, p. 39)

Hutcheon argues that postmodern fiction reminds us of a lack of reality in the historical narrative and helps to undermine the hegemonic historical discourses, without surrendering its own autonomy as fiction. It is in this context of

postmodernist and poststructuralist critique of history that I study *Burnt Shadows* as a narrative which is intended to explore and revise some of the key historical moments of the last few decades. Moreover, it would also be interesting to see how far Shamsie, as a political commentator,<sup>28</sup> uses her text to denaturalize the hegemonic ideologies purported by these events. I argue through this chapter that Shamsie as a paracolonial writer challenges the reliability of the historical narrative. She revisits and represents some of the important events which shaped her national history and affected the international political scene. By doing so she questions the resultant discourse and tries to deconstruct it from the point of view of the marginalized and the suppressed.

The novel opens with a prologue, a very brief one though. The prologue here serves a very specific purpose as it sets the tone of the rest of the novel from the very outset. Even though a sense of ambiguity is present in the prologue, as there are no names mentioned and no specific details provided, it foregrounds a feeling of unease and uncertainty emerging out of the phrases like, ‘fear turning his fingers clumsy’ and the cold steel bench which ‘makes his body shrivel’ (Shamsie, 2009, p.1). It can be assumed that the prologue describes a prison cell, most probably in Guantanamo Bay as the inmate suspects that, ‘he will be wearing an orange jumpsuit’ (Shamsie,

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<sup>28</sup> Shamsie has been a regular contributor of political pieces in the leading UK newspaper the *Guardian*. Pakistan, its people and the issues faced by the both are a recurrent theme in these journalistic pieces of hers. Some of the titles like, *Malala Yousufzai: the pride of Pakistan but she can't go home* (10 Oct 2014), *Malala Yousufzai: It's hard to kill. May be that's why his hand was shaking* (7 Oct 2013), *Imran Khan isn't the only warrior in Pakistan's elections* (9 May 2013), *In Pakistan there's no answer to terror* (19 Feb 2013), *No solidarity in Pakistan* (15 Jan 2013) further support my argument that these Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers are acting as political commentators and interveners through their fictional and non-fictional writings and providing the world with an alternate lens to understand the issues of international concern and significance.

2009, p. 1). The last line of the prologue where the unidentified character wonders, 'how did it come to this?' (Shamsie, 2009, p. 1) is the very question which the whole novel tries to find an answer for. Even though rooted in the context of six decades of human history and contextualized in state-approved atrocities on other nations, *Burnt Shadows* seeks ambitiously to unravel some answers. Shamsie succeeds in highlighting the need for revision and reconstruction of history as a significant and an alternate mode of exploring and questioning the past.

The first part of the novel is set in Nagasaki, Japan, describing the day of 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945 during the Second World War, the day when USA dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, the second one in the history of mankind. The two characters Hiroko and Konrad are introduced in the opening paragraph of the chapter. Konrad is sent to Japan by James Burton, his brother-in-law and a British bureaucrat serving in Colonial India, to take care of an abandoned family property there. Hiroko on the other hand is a Japanese girl who works as a translator for him. As a language translator she 'provides the keys to the novel's ciphers' (Zinck, 2010, p. 47). Threats of air raids are looming in the air and there are rumours of a deadly US bomb which has destroyed Hiroshima a couple of days earlier. War has affected Nagasaki as much as the rest of Japan and Hiroko, while standing on the porch of her house, wonders:

How to explain to the earth that it was more functional as a vegetable patch than a flower garden, just as factories were more functional than schools and boys were more functional as weapons than as humans.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 7)

In the context of an ongoing war, the functional value of everything becomes more necessary than their intrinsic or aesthetic one. Hiroko and Konrad are the two



individuals who present a contrast to this functionality that war had brought with it. The love affair of a Japanese girl and a German man during the war symbolizes human aspirations to transcend the realities of time and geographical boundaries. Shamsie has further used this dichotomy between the aspired and existing realities to resist all those forces which reduce human beings to mere elements of functionality. The bomb is fired exactly after Hiroko and Konrad kiss each other for the first time and dream about their beautiful future ahead. 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945 marks a break in the human history separating the past and the future by the atrocious act of dropping a nuclear bomb on Japan planned in the corridors of the US government.

Hiroko loses both her lover and her father in the nuclear blast and is cursed to live the rest of her life with their memory. The day of destruction is going to be a part of Hiroko's life forever. It is not just the loss of her father and Konrad that she has to live with but the images of three cranes also got imprinted on her back as physical marks of the memories of that day. She bears the curse of *Hibakusha*<sup>29</sup> on her back as a testament of violence. The description of Hiroko's physical injuries in the backdrop of Nagasaki's destruction is startling:

So much to learn. The touch of the dead flesh. The smell – she has just located where the acrid smell comes from – of dead flesh. The sound of fire – who knew fire roared so angrily, ran so quickly? It is running up the slopes now; soon it will catch her. Not just her back, all of her will be Urakami valley. Diamond from Carbon – she briefly imagines herself as a diamond, all of Nagasaki a diamond cutting upon the earth, falling through to hell.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 27)

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<sup>29</sup>*Hibakusha* is a Japanese word whose literal translation is 'explosion-affected people'. The word refers to the victims who survived the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the World War II.

The flesh on her back is dead. The only living thing was fire, roaring angrily and running quickly, as if looking to burn, kill and destroy everything. Konrad is an absent presence throughout the story, living mostly through the memories of Hiroko. Hiroko, on the other hand, is the one who not only survives the atomic blast but also lives long enough to witness many atrocious acts of state violence. Capitalism also emerges as a dominant theme throughout the novel and Shamsie uses these violent episodes from the history to connect capitalism with terrorism. Hiroko's body is a manuscript on which the powerful discourse of capitalism left its imprints forever. Shamsie asserts through *Burnt Shadows* that capitalism has flourished on the expanse of human lives whereas the US nationalism on the destruction and annihilation of other nations.

The second part of the novel 'Veiled Birds' is set in Delhi of 1947 during the time of the crumbling British raj in India. Like all the other parts of the novel this part also narrates the story of characters from two different families, the Burtons and the Ashrafs, belonging to different cultures and different parts of the world. James Burton is a British bureaucrat serving in India and has hired Sajjad Ali Ashraf as his clerk. Their lives are also affected by a significant event from the history of mankind, the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Sajjad and James Burton's relationship is no more different than that of a colonial master and a servant. When Elizabeth, James' wife, asks him not to give Sajjad his discarded clothes, he replies:

Discarded clothes as a metaphor for the end of Empire.  
That's an interesting one. I don't care how he looks at my  
shirt so long as he allows me to choose the moment at  
which it becomes his.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 35)

The above quote is a typical example of the manipulative colonial attitude where the master subjugates the colonized by deciding his fate and that too on his behalf. Sajjad has always been an employee and a member of a colonized nation for the Burtons. He knows his status in the Burton's house and never tries to challenge the hierarchy of power, even after Hiroko arrives at the Burtons' house. Shamsie has woven a web of various crises in both the Burton's and Sajjad's families' parallels to those of partition of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. It is as if both the personal and the political are happening more or less at the same time, affecting and influencing each other. This web of political and personal experiences is intentionally woven to highlight how lives of individuals are inextricably interwoven with and affected because of various decisions and happenings at the greater political level. King also identifies the impact of national and international politics in Shamsie's fiction and stresses that in her novels individual's, 'emotions and their relationship to others is impacted by history and national politics [...] personal cannot be kept separate from the public' (King, 2007, p. 686). Elizabeth and James's married life is falling apart as is the British Empire whereas Hiroko and Sajjad are beginning to fall in love with each other similar to newfound romance by the emergence of two new nations, India and Pakistan. Be it the Burtons, Hiroko or Sajjad, all are struggling to redefine their identities and allegiances, because of so much political chaos around them. Hiroko is a character who has the ability to transcend time and space, accept new cultures and create a contact zone for the people with different nationalities. She loses her German fiancé during the war, travels to India to see her fiancé's half-sister, marries Sajjad(an

Indian Muslim), migrates to Pakistan after partition and finally moves to New York after the death of her husband. It is through her character that Shamsie subdues nationalism in the favour of trans-nationalism, hence advocating the possibility of a third space or as Bhabha calls it an ‘interstitial zone’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2) where different cultures can negotiate instead of manoeuvring each other for supremacy.

Shamsie explores issues like language, history and Indians’ relationships with their colonial masters through her narrative of love, loss, recreation and separations. One day when James, Elizabeth, Hiroko and Sajjad visit Qutb Minar and Sajjad tells them all about his ancestors, he wonders:

This was how things should be – he, an Indian, introducing the English to the history of India, which was his history and not theirs. It was a surprising thought, and something in it made him uneasy.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 80)

Sajjad’s realization, of the fact that it should be him who is to narrate ‘his’ story to the rest of the world instead of the British colonizers, makes him aware of the impossibility of a truthful representation of his ancestors’ history through the colonial discourse of his masters. For the Burtons, it is just another expedition while exploring the world whereas for Sajjad it carries emotional meanings. His comment that, ‘My history is your picnic ground’ (Shamsie, 2009, p. 81) highlights Sajjad’s desire for a proud identity for himself and his dislike for the colonial rule over his ancestors’ past. Sajjad’s past might be a reason for him to be proud of and it might carry emotional meanings with it but for the Burtons, the colonizer, it simply is another wondrous tale about the world they had conquered. It further highlights a defective understanding of the Indian history by the colonizer which they had used to establish their supremacy

over the subcontinent. *Burnt Shadows* (2009) goes a step further than simply establishing the binary of the colonizer and the colonized and investigates the complexities of the relationship between the two. The narrative makes a conscious effort to explore the possibility of a peaceful coexistence of the two (colonizer and colonized) beyond static identities and violent appropriation of each other through Hiroko as she is the one, 'to show both Sajjad and the Burtons that there was no need to imagine such walls between their worlds (Shamsie, 2009, p. 82). She is the only one who has the ability to transcend time and space and tries to undergo a healing process through trans-nationalism. Sajjad also wonders:

Why have the English remained so English? Throughout India's history conquerors have come from elsewhere, and all of them – Turk, Arab, Hun, Mongol, Persian – have become Indian. If – when – this Pakistan happens, those Muslims who leave Delhi and Lucknow and Hyderabad to go there, they will be leaving their homes. But when the English leave, they will be going home.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 82)

As the Partition of the Indian subcontinent<sup>30</sup> is approaching, Sajjad's realization for the need for a stable identity is also getting stronger. For the British it was a journey back home as in spite of living in India for such a long time their British identity had remained intact and stable. On the other hand for the Indians it was not just the winning back of their freedom from the British and becoming an

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<sup>30</sup>For further detailed readings about the Partition of the Indian subcontinent please consult Collins, L. and Lapierre, D. (2009) *Freedom at Midnight: The Epic Drama of India's Struggle for Independence*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd; Tunzelman, A. V. (2008) *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the end of an Empire*. London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd; Keay J. (2010) *India: A History* New York: Grove Press and Khan, Y. (2008) *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*. London: Yale University Press. There is a large number of novels that provide fictional accounts of the Partition for example Rushdie, S. (1995 [1981]) *Midnight's Children*. London: Vintage Books; Singh, K. (1994 [1956]) *Train to Pakistan*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers; Sidhwa, B. (1991) *Cracking India: A novel*. Washington: Milkweed Editions.

Indian again but this division of the Indian subcontinent caused a ruptured identity for them in the form of a new country Pakistan. The Indians were to be further divided into two nations and their identities to be re-determined as a result of this division. Their identity had become a shifting reality. Sajjad is beginning to realize this instability of identity and is getting more and more desperate for definitions in terms of geographical and national borders. His present identity is on the verge of collapse and the accompanying pain is acute. All the characters in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) are displaced from their roots at some point. Hiroko left Japan as she could not bear with the memories of the destruction caused by the atom bomb. Partition will displace Sajjad and the Burtons both as Sajjad will be leaving for Pakistan and the Burtons will be going back to their native country. Elizabeth's identity also oscillates between her German and British roots. James will soon be leaving for his native country as the British Raj in India was about to end and Sajjad, against all his desires to remain in India, will also be leaving for Pakistan once the partition of the Subcontinent takes place. This sense of displacement and feelings of not belonging anywhere leave them with personal and collective loss which haunts them throughout the narrative. Elizabeth's anger is evident when she wonders furiously in her moments of despair:

*I was made to leave Berlin when I was just a little younger than him – I know the pain of it. What do you know of leaving, you whose family has lived in Delhi for centuries? But beneath that anger there was something that felt a great deal like hurt. We were just starting to get on, that place beneath anger wanted to say.*

(Shamsie, 2009, pp. 83-84)

The identity crises for the female characters in *Burnt Shadows* are profound. What appear to be retrospective tales of the women from their lives at the first look turn out to be highly penetrating episodes carrying much connotative and symbolic significance and meaning. Their characters are developed through loss of identity and belonging. In order to survive they have to undergo a metamorphosis and reinvent themselves. Hiroko suffers the most in this process. 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1945 not only took away her fiancé but also her nationalism. Her body is marked with, ‘the three charcoal-coloured bird-shaped burns on her back, the first below her shoulder blade, the second halfway down her spine, intersected by her bra, the third just above her waist’ (Shamsie, 2009, pp. 90-91). Her body is literally and figuratively a script which history had chosen to write its verdict upon. She was a living monument of the most horrifying and brutal act of human history.

Hiroko is a character who resists norms right from the beginning of the novel. During the war she falls in love with a German man, she is the daughter of a person declared a traitor for his rebellious ideologies and to James Burton’s surprise travels to India alone. She keeps trying to defy all actions intended to suppress her identity. She has the ability to re-contextualize and change herself and she does so by trying to leave history behind herself. The suffering that she has seen and experienced during the atomic explosion in Japan has taught her not only to live with grief and pain but has also taught her the importance of letting go of the past in order to go for new beginnings. By leaving her individual losses and larger catastrophes behind and forgiving those who were responsible for these, she was able to continue to exist in

an otherwise rigid, static and hostile world. Through Hiroko, Shamsie argues that only by subduing the political and personal differences and by emerging out of troubled histories, can there be a possibility of a peaceful coexistence between different cultures. By contextualizing her narrative in wars, destruction and competing ideologies, Shamsie criticizes the global capitalist forces on the one hand whereas on the other hand favours a world where national identities matter less and different characters have to undergo a shift in terms of their identity.

Elizabeth, in contrast to Hiroko, is subjugated and subdued by her husband and her existence has become limited to her household duties and James' official parties. She has discarded her half-German origin and is trying to construct a complete English identity for herself. She has succumbed to the patriarchal and authoritative James Burton and has accepted the role of a passive housewife. Her acknowledgment of the fact is evident in her words to Hiroko when she remarks:

Women enter their husbands' lives, Hiroko – all around the world. It doesn't happen the other way round. We are the ones who adapt. Not them. They don't know how to do it. They don't see why they should do it.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 98)

The feminist discourse of Pakistani female writers is very much rooted in the fact that women are, as Suleri's character Ifat protests in *Meatless Days*, reduced to their bodies and their household responsibilities in this patriarchal society (Suleri, 1989, 143). But Hiroko's presence in Elizabeth's home as a strong female, her son's admission in a boarding school in England, crumbling British Empire in India and apprehensions of another displacement make her defy any form of patriarchal control exerted by her husband. Both Elizabeth and Hiroko's lives suffer at the hands of



history and their characters challenge any nation's right to bring destruction to other ones for their own benefit. Shamsie's feminist discourse also emerges as an anti-capitalist one where she rejects international capitalist venture as modes of destruction and abuse.

Sajjad's mother passes away and he marries Hiroko in search of a new beginning and is hoping to find a new centre for his life. Sajjad is not willing to leave Delhi but has to go to Istanbul with his new wife until the Hindu-Muslim riots, at the time of partition in 1947, subside. Once the things are settled and he tries to go back to India, he is not granted the permission on his account of being a Muslim. So he is left with no other option but to go to Pakistan as a migrant. Delhi, his first love, is lost and he feels betrayed and displaced. Partition has changed his life altogether, and more importantly his identity. He is no more an Indian but a Pakistani now. The creation of new national borders has deprived him of his previous identity. All his life he had lived as an Indian with his nationality and history, of which he was very proud, engraved on his soul. Now developing a new identity and becoming a Pakistani was as painful for him as if his soul is forced to stay in India and he has to live the rest of his life in a soulless body. The British Empire was not concerned about his history and roots and never took individuals into account. His individual loss of identity was too insignificant to be noticed. He is supposed to come to terms with the changes that this new political decision had caused in his life as he has no other option. Both Hiroko and Sajjad are displaced now and have to come to terms with a new life and identity.

The third part of the novel is set in Karachi, Pakistan during the years 1982-3 where Hiroko and Sajjad have moved to after their displacement from Delhi, India.

Both of them respond differently to their displacements:

She was a woman who had learnt that she could leave everything behind, and survive. [...] For him, the loss of home had a quite different effect – it made him believe he only survived it because he had her. Would survive anything if he had her; would lose everything if he lost her.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 135)

The loss, Hiroko suffered in Nagasaki, had given her the confidence that she could survive any such calamities on her own. Sajjad on the other hand needed a centre to which he could hold onto and Hiroko had become that inevitable centre for him.

Karachi has emerged as an important and recurrent geographical location in Shamsie's writings. She has spent most of her formative years in Karachi and the city, as represented through her novels, carries emotional meanings for her. King (2011) in *Kamila Shamsie's Novels of History, Exile and Desire* analyzes five novels written by Shamsie and argues that her fiction emerges from an, 'emotional discomfort that results from leaving the security of the past, a past represented by home, family, friendships and Karachi' (King, 2011, p. 147). *In the City by the Sea* (1998), *Kartography* (2002) and *Broken Verses* (2005) represent life in Karachi, the biggest city of Pakistan, and her fifth novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009) also goes on to explore the rise of a religious narrative in the city during the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq during 1980s. Her fiction, 'alludes to conquests, wars, interventions, struggles for independence, and other events in which violence affects society and private lives' (King, 2011, p. 147). Shamsie believes that a study of the

effects of history on several generations of a family, an understanding of the past and the role of military in a country's history are significant in understanding any country's political culture and national discourse. In *Burnt Shadows* (2009) she uses Karachi as an important landscape where she paints a picture of life in 1980s and then goes on to explore the impact of the political on the personal.

The decade of 1980s is a very significant period in the history of Pakistan. It was a time when Pakistan saw a wave of Islamization dominating the socio-political milieu of the country as Rouse comments on the phenomena that, Zia's regime witnessed 'a powerful alliance between the guardians of the state and guardians of public and private morality' (Rouse, 1988, pp. 59-60). Suleri in her memoir *Meatless Days* also laments this phenomenon with an undertone of irony:

We dimly knew we were about to witness Islam's departure from the land of Pakistan. The men would take it to the streets and make it vociferate, but the great romance between religion and the populace, the embrace that engendered Pakistan, was done.

(Suleri, 1989, p. 15)

Religion has emerged as an important and dominating discourse in the recent novels of the paracolonial Pakistani fiction writers. The 9/11 incident, Taliban's strong hold in the north Western areas of Pakistan and the West's critical and stereotypical gaze towards the country as a religiously radicalized society has also made it pertinent for these paracolonial writers to write on the matter and present an intervening political discourse and alternate viewpoint about the whole issue. Even Suleri writing towards the end of 1980s, almost a decade before 9/11, has written vociferously expressing her apprehensions about the rise of Islamization in Pakistan and the accompanying

threats. King (2011) also highlights West's role in empowering the religious groups in Pakistan when he argues:

The West's, especially American, backing of the Islamists to fight against the Russians in Afghanistan strengthened the religious in Pakistan. Later the Islamists won seats in parliament and were claiming democratic rights while a military dictatorship was liberalizing the media.

(King, 2011, p. 157)

Bearded men, Afghan mujahedin, Taliban and CIA are a recurrent presence in *Burnt Shadows* (2009). Hiroko is once told in a bookshop by a bearded young man not to read *War and Peace* as it is a book written by an enemy of Islam. She wonders about the Pakistani society's acceptance of wilful religious exploitation at the hands of the government:

So many sleeves all the way to wrists instead of just part-way down the upper arm, and covered heads here and there. It made no sense to her. Islamization was a word everyone recognised as a political tool of a dictator and yet they still allowed their lives to be changed by it. She didn't worry for herself but Raza was still so unformed that it troubled her to think what the confusion of a still-forming nation might do to him.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 182)

Raza Conrad Ashraf, Hiroko and Sajjad's son, though has inherited the love for learning different languages from his mother but could not inherit the optimism and the quality of forward looking both his parents possessed. He struggles to find his identity, torn between his mother's Japanese origin, his father's love for Delhi, Harry Burton's promises of admission in a US university and a newly emerging Islamic nationalist discourse in the society during the 1980s. Even his name speaks of his ruptured identity as it contains the links to three different cultures and lands; Pakistani, German and Indian. Moreover his Japanese mother adds a fourth

dimension to his identity. Divided between so many identities, he finds himself struggling for any stable roots. His love for different languages highlights his efforts to transcend any fixed identity and like his mother he also realizes that identity in itself is a fluid concept which keeps shifting. Hiroko and Raza's love for learning other languages indicates an effort to translate their identity from abstraction into some sort of solidity. The act of 'translation is removal from one language into another through a continuum of transformations' (Benjamin, 2004, p. 70) and both Hiroko and Raza, realizing that their transnational roots make their identity complex and unstable, try to find a solace and solution through learning different languages. They are trying to transform themselves and their identity by trying to contextualizing themselves in different languages.

Emily Apter (2011) in *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* argues:

Cast as an act of love, and as an act of disruption, translation becomes a means of repositioning the subject in the world and in history; a means of rendering self-knowledge foreign to itself; a way of denaturalizing citizens, taking them out of the comfort zone of national space, daily ritual and pre-given domestic arrangements. It is a truism that the experience of becoming proficient in another tongue delivers a salubrious blow to narcissism, both national and individual... Translation is a significant medium of subject re-formation and political change.

(Apter, 2011, p. 6)

The act of learning new languages in *Burnt Shadows* not only highlights various characters' desire to transform their identity but it also challenges the concept of nationalism. In congruence with Apter's (2011) idea of 'subject re-formation and repositioning' through the act of translation, Shamsie also favours a transnational world where different characters learn new languages to destabilize and

transform their old identity. These characters challenge the idea of an individual's identity, rooted in the national space and discourse, in search of a more inclusive and forbearing brand of transnational identity. Apter (2011) further goes on to argue that the translation zone is:

[...] a zone of critical engagement that connects the “t” and the “n” of translation and transNation. The common root “trans” operates as a connecting part of translational transnationalism [...] as well as the point of debarkation to a cultural caesura – a trans – ation – where transmission failure is marked.

(Apter, 2011, p. 5)

Hiroko's ability to learn new language, her disregard for the national borders and her unrestricted and free movement to various parts of the world indicates her call for a world which can think and act beyond the limitations of national borders. Furthermore, the plot arrangement in *Burnt Shadows*, allowing Hiroko to move to four different countries with a particular ease, favours a transnational world where people are not identified and restricted because of their specific national identities and borders. Moreover, Shamsie takes Hiroko on a journey of different countries during moments of destabilization and crisis. Her suffering, be it in Japan, India, Pakistan or USA, is because of a violence and terror which was unleashed on common people in the name of protection and sovereignty of nation-states. She keeps on moving, across national borders, from one place to another, but state-controlled violence follows her wherever she goes.

The political nature of Shamsie's narrative also conforms to Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) notion of 'minor literatures'. They argue that minor literatures emerge from a minor community, involves politicization of issues and a

deterritorialization of language. Accusations of helping and providing shelter to terrorist organizations have left Pakistan alone in the international world. Moreover an unstable political culture, social and ethnic crises and terrorist activities within the country have resulted in uncertain and unstable future. Deleuze and Guattari sum up three basic characteristics of minor literatures:

The three characteristic of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of an individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation. We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature.

(Deleuze and Guattari , 1986, p. 18)

In such moment of crises and uncertainty Shamsie, along with other Pakistani paracolonial writers, produces fiction which is necessarily rooted in social and political issues prevailing in Pakistan. Situated at the margins, in an international discourse, Shamsie as a paracolonial writer explores not only the indigenous problems faced by Pakistan but also involves its international readers by providing them with the details of troublesome and unpredictable life in Pakistan and possible solutions for tackling this chaotic situation. She questions the stability of Pakistan, grappling with all the indigenous and international crises, as a nation-state and favours a transnational world where identities are constructed beyond geographical and religious identities.

Hiroko is worried for her son Raza as she understands the pain that this loss of identity and feelings of displacement carry with them. Raza, during his moments of despair, meets Abdullah who is a young Afghan boy living in Karachi. Raza also

introduces himself to Abdullah as an Afghan named Raza Hazara, learns how to assemble an AK-47, teaches him English and even travels to Afghanistan to join one of the Mujahidin camp. During the whole process he tries to find and create a new tangible identity for himself. While Raza is in Afghanistan, Sajjad is killed by a CIA agent when he goes to the harbour in search of his son. Each war brings more loss to Hiroko. She lost Conrad during the Second World War and now she has lost Sajjad when her son gets involved in the Russian invasion in Afghanistan. Shamsie treats these wars as capitalist ventures where superior political and military powers have exploited the weaker ones for their own benefits. Harry's understanding of the Afghan-Russia war is revealing of its nature as an internationally collaborative venture:

It had been a three way affair: Egypt provided the Soviet-made arms, USA provided financing, training and technological assistance, and Pakistan provided the base for training camps. But now, the war was truly international. Arms from Egypt, China and – soon – Israel. Recruits from all over the Muslim world [...] Here was internationalism, powered by capitalism.

(Shamsie, 2009, pp. 203-4)

Shamsie uses innumerable historical events including Second World War, British colonial raj in India, partition of the Indian subcontinent, Russian invasion of Afghanistan, rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan, 9/11 and then War against Terror to build a nexus between capitalism at work and the current wave of terrorism in the world and, 'insists that the reader acknowledge the historical relationship between imperialist world order and terrorism' (Singh, 2012, p. 9). USA was very much involved in creating and training an army of Islamic jihadists to counter the



Russians in Afghanistan which ultimately backfired in the form of 9/11. Even though Shamsie chooses not to describe the event of 9/11, as she has done with the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and the partition of the Indian subcontinent, the impact of the incident is far too great to be ignored in the novel. King (2011) establishes that *Burnt Shadows*' primary focus is on 9/11 and the resultant prejudices against other nations. He argues:

Fear, prejudice and inhumanity threaten even the most liberal societies. While *Burnt Shadows* mentions the horrors of Japanese nationalism, alludes to Nazi Germany's mistreatment of the Jews, and shows the murderous hatreds that accompanied the Partition of India, a central theme is the effect of war on the US.

(King, 2011, p. 157)

The fourth, and also the last, part of the novel is set partly in USA and partly in Afghanistan and discusses a post-9/11 world. Hiroko has gone to USA under the looming threats of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan. Raza has joined Harry Burton and works in Afghanistan for a US military contractor. The US government has launched another war in Afghanistan to avenge the deaths of 9/11. The CIA and the FBI are after all the terrorist suspects and abettors, mainly Afghan and Pakistani Muslims. US image of a super power has been challenged. The US nation has fallen back on its national symbols in order to show its solidarity with the government.

Kim Burton, Harry's daughter recalls post-9/11 USA:

[...] she'd noticed flags. Despite these months of seeing so many of them in the city she'd still been taken aback by their profusion. Flags stuck on back windows of cars; flags on bumper stickers; flags impaled on antennae; flags on little flag poles adhered to side mirrors; flags hanging out of windows; flags waving a welcome at service stations.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 342)

The US cities were swarmed with the national flags as a symbol of desire to recapture and regain the old sense of authority over the rest of the world. Shamsie presents a counter narrative to the popular and one dimensional discourse of War against Terror and works as a political intervener.

Pascal Zinck (2010) in *Eyeless in Guantanamo: Vanishing Horizons in Kamila Shamsie's Burnt Shadows* explores the narrative as Diaspora fiction and argues that, '*Burnt Shadows* reflects the tensions and ambiguities of all Diaspora fictional discourse as narratives of dislocation and relocation, erasure, deferment and nostalgia' (Zinck, 2010, p. 45). He further goes on to argue that *Burnt Shadows* 'offers an insight into Islamic terrorism, not perceived as merely a response to Islamophobia, but as a reaction to and a by-product of cultural globalisation' (Zinck, 2010, p. 45). He believes that Shamsie criticizes US-centred globalization through an exploration of a culture of homegenization which is governed by geopolitics. Zinck categorizes recent diaspora fiction propagating the need to return to one's homeland instead of resilience, acculturation and hybridity. He concludes that by making Hiroko the protagonist and the interpreter of the novel, Shamsie 'transcends the narrow confines of ethnicity and religion responsible for the worst excesses of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries' (Zinck, 2010, p. 51). Through the characters of Hiroko and Abdullah, Shamsie challenges the popular Western discourse which constructs and deepens the binaries of West versus non-West, USA versus rest of the world and USA versus Islam.

Singh (2012) argues:

By decentering the nation and privileging the global relationships of colonialism, culture, and history, Shamsie unsettles the seamless singularity with which temporal and religious binaries (modern/regressive, secular/fundamentalist, Western/non-Western) are enacted to justify the war on terror.

(Singh, 2012, p. 9)

When Kim is transporting Abdullah across the US border into Canada,

Abdullah's comments about the US people's attitude towards wars disturb Kim:

War is like disease [...] countries like yours they always fight wars, but always somewhere else. The disease always happens somewhere else. It's why you fight more wars than anyone else; because you understand war least of all. You need to understand it better.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 344)

Abdullah accuses USA of a lack of understanding and hence waging wars on other countries in the name of national interests. King also argues that *Burnt Shadows* (2009) 'makes a parallel between the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and US involvement in Afghanistan – with its consequences to Pakistan and Muslims worldwide' (King, 2011, p. 158) and the horrors of the US people's disregard for the lives of those whom they consider a threat to their national solidarity. The lives of Hiroko, Sajjad, Raza, Abdullah and Kim suffered from loss, displacement and identity crisis because of wars they had seen. Hiroko lost her lover and her husband. Sajjad and Kim both lost their fathers. Abdullah had to leave Afghanistan and spent half of his life in exile. Hiroko underwent displacement twice in her life. Through this unbearable loss and displacement, Shamsie questions the legitimacy of the US War against Terror.

Raza is accused of Harry Burton's murder and Kim becomes the reason of his arrest. When Hiroko demands an explanation, Kim's reply is of great relevance in defining the increasing distance and apprehensions between the West and the Islamic world:

I trusted my training. Don't you understand? If you suspect a threat you can't just ignore it because you wish – and I really really wish this – you lived in a world where all suspicion of Muslims is just prejudice, nothing more.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 360)

Through Kim, Shamsie rejects the West's training and information, about those existing on the peripheries, as faulty and inadequate. Raza has neither murdered Harry nor is he a terrorist. Similarly Abdullah is also not a terrorist but Kim, in spite of all her skills and the Western education, fails to recognize this. Both Kim and Hiroko have seen wars waged on their people and countries and both have lost their loved ones during these wars. But both have a different perspective of a post-war world. Kim is unable to transcend the fact that her country and family had to suffer at the hands of a war as she shouts back at Hiroko that, 'it wasn't Buddhists flying those planes' (Shamsie, 2009, p. 361). Kim, 'develops a paranoid sense of nationalism together with a deep mistrust of anything un-American' (Zinck, 2010, p. 48) and believes that she served her country by getting a terrorist suspect arrested. Hiroko on the other hand, after having seen horrors of nuclear war, partition of the Indian subcontinent and the resultant displacement of millions of people, 9/11, War on Terror and losing all her family to these wars, has shown an ability to transcend time and geographical identities. It is this ability of hers that allows her to start anew every time. She tells Kim of her understanding of past as:

You just have to put them in a little corner of the big picture. In the big picture of the Second World War, what was seventy-five thousand more Japanese dead? Acceptable, that's what it was. In the big picture of threats to USA, what is one Afghan? Expendable. Maybe he's guilty, maybe not. Why risk it? Kim, you are the kindest, most generous woman I know. But right now, because of you, I understand for the first time how nations can applaud when their governments drop a second nuclear bomb.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 362)

Hiroko understands the need to overcome loss and grief for new beginnings. Kim becomes the reason for her to understand how stronger nations can exploit and destroy the weaker ones to ascertain their hegemony and supremacy over the world. Hiroko, having seen the horrors of war and the loss that accompanies it, does not criticize Kim on her inaccurate and erroneous judgment. Instead she accepts and understands the pain that Kim had to go through after 9/11 and the loss of her father in Afghanistan.

*Burnt Shadows* (2009), as a paracolonial text, challenges the post-9/11 unilateral US discourse and makes use of the complexities of the historical narrative to discuss 9/11 as a logical outcome of the West's imperialist policies and exploitation of the Third World countries during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She has used the concepts of nationalism and trans-nationalism to initiate meaningful dialogue and engagement between the West and the Islamic world. She argues in favour of creating a space or an 'interstitial zone' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2) where two powerful and opposing discourses of today's world can engage in a debate and explore each other. Moreover, Shamsie reverses the power structures in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) where West is not defining the identity of others but West's

own identity is being deconstructed and redefined through the Third World, paracolonial and migrant discourse. *Burnt Shadows* (2009) explores issues like wars, history, nationalism, racism and merging and disappearing boundaries. While doing so the narrative builds a case in favour of a transnational world where national and cultural affiliations do not become a reason for bringing death and destruction to those who exist on the other side of the border.

## **Chapter 5: Mohsin Hamid: An Author of Competing Narratives**

Being a paracolonial Anglophone Pakistani fiction writer, Hamid's novels present a case of Pakistan, as a marginalized and the peripheral country, to the rest of the world. He rejects and disrupts the dominant and hegemonic discourse of centre, both indigenous and international, and narrates his stories from the point of view of the suppressed and marginalized. In this chapter I analyze Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2001) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) with the proposition that his work not only dissects and deconstructs Pakistani society but also introduces its various facets to the international readership. *Moth Smoke* (2001) deals with the mechanics of the socio-economic strata of Pakistan and highlights the moral and financial corruption, social fragmentation, class conflict and the emergence of extremist forces in the society. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) on the other hand addresses the post-9/11 US and Pakistani societies and their suspicious gaze and responses towards each other.

9/11 not only challenged the US hegemony over the rest of the world but it also had a great impact on the Pakistani society. The Western discourse, in print and electronic media alike, which emerged in the wake of War against Terror, labelled Pakistan as a terrorist-sympathiser country and Pakistani people as terrorist suspects. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), by reversing the power structures, creates a space where the hegemony of the Western, particularly US, discourse is destabilized

and makes it compete against the discourse of Islamic fundamentalism. Morey (2013) argues in favour of Hamid's strategy of reversing the power structures within his narrative:

We need to expand and defamiliarize our own imaginative territory and, for writers, to find a space *between* (or at least from which to try to encapsulate) conflicting interests and positions. The novel, instead of just describing people's feelings, could usefully explore the contradictions that animate debates in the world today, making the text a site of struggle for these different versions.

(Morey, 2013, p. 141)

Morey argues that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) defamiliarizes and deterritorializes the discursive constructs and asks his readers to explore the space beyond the divisive binaries of 'us versus them' and 'East versus West'. Furthermore, in the wake of events like the US invasion of Afghanistan, Taliban's propagation of extremist religious ideologies and thousands of deaths of innocent Pakistani civilians in Taliban's militant activities have shattered the basis of Pakistani society. The paracolonial Pakistani writers are highlighting these social and political crises through their writings and are responding to the hegemonic Western discourse. The efforts to recapture the 9/11 incident through fiction is an effort to deconstruct the past and provide alternates for the future. Interestingly and quite understandably, the reaction of the literary intelligentsia and the academia is different from both the countries. Norman Mailer, the US novelist, saw 9/11 as victory for devil.<sup>31</sup> He writes:

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<sup>31</sup> A large number of fictional texts, written in the West, in the wake of 9/11 replicate the Western discourse situated in the feelings of trauma and loss. The Islamic fundamentalists are represented as figures who are challenging and threatening, not only the West, but also the Western mode of existence itself. Some examples include McEwan, I. (2006 [2005]) *Saturday*. London: Vintage; Foer,



Yes, Satan as the pilot who guided those planes into that ungodly denouement [...] Yes, as if part of the Devil's aesthetic acumen was to bring it off, exactly as if we were watching the same action movie we had been looking at for years. That may be at the core of the immense impact 9/11 had on USA. Our movies came off the screen and chased us down the canyons of the city.

(Mailer, 2003, pp. 110–111)

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a counter-narrative and an intervention into the hegemonic discourse of the West. The US response to this threat was a replication of the colonial policies and imperialistic practices by further strengthening the binary of 'us' versus 'them'. Through the discursive production and then reinforcement of these binaries, USA justified itself in unleashing state violence on other parts of the world. Said (1988, p. 149) in *The Essential Terrorist* argues that terrorism has replaced communism as the biggest threat to the West and all the discourse has now repositioned itself targeting the new enemy. The binary of civilized versus terrorist is being reinforced; Islam has become synonymous with terrorism and the Muslims with terrorists. The 'deadly orientalist logic' (Boehmer & Morton, 2010, p. 11)<sup>32</sup> is more powerful than ever. During such moments of crisis the role of the intelligentsia, both of the West and the Third World countries also changed drastically. Both became more aggressive and tried to respond to the crisis at hand. Unfortunately, the discourse produced by the West is unilateral and one-dimensional in establishing the anti-colonial 'other' and flawed for representing terrorism as a 'cause' instead of an

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J. S. (2005) *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. New York: Penguin Books and McGrath, P. (2005) *Ghost Town: Tales of Manhattan Then and Now*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

<sup>32</sup> Boehmer, E. and Morton, S. (eds.) (2010) *Terror and the Postcolonial*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. The book goes on to theorize terrorism in postcolonialism, literature, culture and colonial history. The book becomes further relevant for contextualizing the issue of terrorism in the modern world in an analysis of various literary texts from Africa, South Asia and Middle East.

effect of the colonial oppression and imperialistic policies (Boehmer & Morton, 2010, p. 11). On the other hand the discourse produced in the Third World countries has not only deconstructed the Western texts but has also furnished the world with an alternate lens to look at the whole issue, from a different perspective. Moreover, an intellectual based in the Third World country is always, in one way or another, is a political intellectual and his texts are necessarily rooted in the political context Fredric Jameson (1986, p. 74). Hence, it becomes pertinent to study the paracolonial Pakistani writers' anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonic discourse and their work as a political intersection on the popular and powerful Western narrative, particularly in the context of a post-9/11 world.

Both the novels by Hamid are an intervention on the hegemonic discourses and the popular expositions as he reverses the power structures by giving voice to the hitherto marginalized and silenced ones. Hamid's decentring the powerful narrative is a central trope of both the Postmodern and Postcolonial theory as Thomas Docherty (1993) in *Periphery and Postmodernism* remarks:

The mode of thinking which would set up "centre" against "periphery" in a bipolar structural opposition is unremittingly modernist. It is also just such an opposition which enables the power relations in imperialism and colonialism. . . .In a certain sense, the discourse of postmodernism – although it is a discourse established in a Eurocentred "First" world – is the discourse *of* the periphery, a discourse which imperialism had strenuously silenced but which is now made available.

(Docherty, 1993, p. 445)

The paracolonial Pakistani writers make use of the analytical tools provided by postmodernism and give voice to discourses emerging from the peripheries and the

margins. Paracolonial fiction highlights the fact how literary writers and intelligentsia from a nation in crisis respond. Moreover, such writings define the role of a paracolonial writer not only as political interveners but also through the way they analyze, examine and narrate the moments of crisis.

This chapter analyzes how Hamid has responded to the decay and fragmentation of the Pakistani society on the one hand and on the other what strategies of narration does he employ as a paracolonial writer to respond to the rest of the world after 9/11. Furthermore, this chapter explores whether Hamid's fictional reconstruction of 9/11 in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* challenge the Western hegemonic viewpoint about Pakistan and Pakistanis or not.

### **5.1: *Moth Smoke*: A Socio-Political Allegory of Modern Pakistan**

*Moth Smoke* (2001) is a novel that deals with the conflicting forces, not only on the structural but also on the thematic level. These forces contest each other for control and hegemony and through this conflict raise various interpretations which in turn compete for supremacy. Capitalism, Marxism and rising Islamic fundamentalism are all at work within the text, trying to dominate each other. Parallel to this, various characters from different social classes are endeavouring to hegemonize each other's lives. Amidst all this struggle and conflict *Moth Smoke* (2001) discusses the Westernized Pakistani youth, drugs, social, moral and individual corruptions highlighted against the backdrop of the political turmoil between India and Pakistan.

Beginning with the story of the great Mughal emperor Shah Jehan and the war of succession among his sons, the novel presents the contesting narratives of three young people, Darashikoh Shezad (Daru), Aurangzeb (Ozi) and Mumtaz, highlighting their desire to control the people and the resources around them. Hamid uses this trial as the central trope of his novel around which he weaves many trials that his characters undergo. Social injustices erupting from economic differences have left the nation striving to look for alternate systems of social and economic equality, in this case Islamic fundamentalism. By linking his narrative of modern day

Lahore to the tale of the Mughal princes, Hamid alienates himself from the era of the British colonial rule in the subcontinent. Instead he seems interested in deconstructing the mechanics of the modern day Pakistani society, governed by capitalism, which I argue is the central characteristic of the paracolonial fiction. This act of ignoring the colonial history while deconstructing today's Pakistan is a common and new trend in the Anglophone Pakistani fiction writings and the term that describes this phenomenon is 'Paracolonialism'. Both the novels by Hamid, *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, fall back on the pre-colonial Mughal dynasty of the Muslim rule in the subcontinent whenever the intention is for some comparison or a search of long lost glory of Islam and the Muslims in the region. *Moth Smoke's* (2001) brilliance lies in its addressing the issues of the Pakistani nation while segregating its current socio-political and economic crises from its past colonial experience. Furthermore, influenced by Barthes' (1974) concept of *lisible* (readerly) and *scriptible* (writerly) texts, Hamid constructs his narratives in such a way that it demands an active participation on the part of the reader. The readers are required to act as the jury and pass their own judgements about various characters' motives and actions. The trial can further be understood as an elegy of the dilemmas of a common man in Pakistan caught between the socio-political, religious and the economic crises that the country is going through. Published in 2001 *Moth Smoke* is a collective history of modern day Lahore of late 1990s foregrounding the saga of class struggle in Pakistan.

Darashikoh Shezad (Daru), the protagonist, is an MBA from Lahore and works in a bank for a meagre pay. His friend Aurangzeb (Ozi), along with his wife Mumtaz, has just returned from USA after completing his MBA degree and enjoys the luxury of a big house, security guards, Pajeros and servants. Daru, Ozi and Mumtaz, belonging to different social and economic status, have their stories intertwined with each other through friendship, love and hatred and class warfare. Their quest and struggle is to gain power and control not only over their but each others lives; leading to the tragic downfall of Daru. Each day of Daru's life is like a trial where he feels victimized by the social and economic injustices and disparities. Daru's economic crisis resulting in his becoming a social misfit in his friends' circle leads him towards a life of drugs and robbery.

*Moth Smoke* (2001) establishes the tussle between the various contesting forces from the very outset. The protagonist's poor social standing is set in contrast to his best friend's financial stability. The narrative goes on to place social, political and economic ideologies in competition with each other where narrative's outcome and resolution are determined by their struggle for supremacy. Furthermore, the novel presents the conflicting ideologies of various characters and offers a view of their place in the future course of their nation and their country. Many Postcolonial states have tried to revise, redefine and restructure their identity and place in the world but yet have remained a victim of internal socio-political ruptures and economic crises at the hands of neo-colonialism. Hamid, on the other hand, seems less concerned about the ills of the British colonial Raj in Pakistan and more about a

link to pre-colonial past. He tries to separate his story from a usual postcolonial argument by consciously linking his tale of modern day Lahore with that of Mughal princes Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb from the pre-colonial era. Hamid has tried to highlight the negative impacts of capitalism on the Pakistani society yet he does so by dissociating it from the history of Colonialism. I argue through this research that Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers consciously ignore the colonial era as a narrative strategy which can best be described by the term paracolonialism. By letting go of the colonial baggage they are more interested in the deconstruction of the post-independence socio-political decay. Jay (2005) criticizes Hamid for ignoring the socio-political, cultural and economic impact of colonialism and simply blaming Capitalism for all the ills in Pakistan. He comments that, ‘the global system at the centre of *Moth Smoke* (2001) does not mark a clean break from the colonial system. Rather it is connected ... to the linked operation of colonialism and Western capitalism’ (Jay, 2005, p. 56). Ania Loomba, in this regard, also negates the possibility of once colonized nation’s being completely free of its colonial history or its influences:

A country may be both postcolonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependant) at the same time... The new global order does not depend upon direct rule. However, it does allow the economic, cultural and (to varying degrees) political penetration of some countries by others. This makes it debateable whether once colonized countries can be seen as properly ‘post-colonial’.  
(Loomba, 1998, p. 7)

Keeping in view Jay (2005) and Lommba’s (1998) arguments it appears that any effort to deconstruct the socio-political or economic structures of a once colonized

nation while alienating it completely from the possible impacts of colonization is not only an over simplification rather a misinterpretation and hence misrepresentation of the situation. Even though the political and economic structures of the Pakistani society have emerged more out of its immediate colonial past yet Hamid detaches his narrative from colonialism and instead links it to Mughal pre-colonial history. Through this manoeuvre Hamid, as a paracolonial writer, does not allow colonialism to be used as a scapegoat responsible for the socio-economic fragmentation in postcolonial society, even half a century after independence. He intentionally focuses on the decaying social structure, increasing class conflict and their impact on the lives of the middle and the lower middle classes and holds the political leadership responsible for it. Hamid, in one of his interviews, justifies his choice:

I certainly think that there is a post-post-colonial generation. I'm sure a lot of voices you're seeing coming out now are people who never had a colonial experience. We don't place a burden of guilt on someone who is no longer there. So it's like, what are we doing with where we come from, and how can we address issues here. It's our fault if things aren't going well.

(Hamid, *The Chronicle Online*)

Hamid departs from traditional postcolonial writings by deconstructing the political and social decay of the post-independence Pakistan and by alienating it from the evils of colonialism. Instead he constructs his narrative highlighting the social degeneration and puts the responsibility for this decay and degeneration on the native ruling elite and upper class of the country who are exploiting the masses for their own political and economic gains.



The narrative structure of *Moth Smoke* (2001) is also of great significance and contributes a lot in the emergence of meaning from the text. Hamid seems influenced by the multi-narrative technique practiced by modernist fiction writers like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Henry James. By employing this technique in *Moth Smoke*, he demands the reader to become more active and attentive in reading the text. Barthes' concept of *lisible* (readerly) and *scriptible* (writerly) texts becomes relevant in Hamid's strategy to involve his readers in producing meaning from the text. Barthes argues that, 'Why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but the producer of the text' (Barthes, 1972, 4).<sup>33</sup> Barthes believed that a *lisible* or readerly text leaves the reader with no freedom except to reject or accept the text whereas while reading a *scriptible* or writerly text, he becomes an active producer of the meaning along with the author. The conflicting and challenging multiple narrative voices in *Moth Smoke* makes it a *scriptible* text where the reader is required to become an active producer of the meaning.

The whole novel, excluding the prologue and the epilogue, is divided into seventeen chapters out of which nine are narrated by Daru. But more importantly after every two chapters narrated by Daru comes a chapter narrated by one of the three other main characters (Ozi, Mumtaz and Murad Badshah). Hamid has presented Daru's character through more than one viewpoint to let the reader triangulate his own version of reality. Each interpolated chapter challenges Daru's

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<sup>33</sup>For a detailed discussion please see Barthes, R. (1972) *Critical Essays*. New York: Hill and Wang.

version of the events and presents an alternative truth for the reader. Pakistan is a country with a multiplicity of narratives, like religion, extremism, nationalism, social injustices etc., Hamid makes them compete against each other by putting them together in *Moth Smoke*. The final choice is left with the reader to judge and choose a reliable and trustworthy narrative. Instead of a passive reader he becomes an active one.

Hamid uses rich imagery and striking symbols to make the narration more forceful. An atmosphere of gloom hangs over the narrative right from the start till the very end of the novel. The first sentence of chapter one, 'My cell is full of shadows. Hanging naked from a wire in the hall outside, a bulb casts light cut by rusted bars into thin strips that snake along the concrete floor and up the back wall' (Hamid, 2001, p. 5) gives a description of the cell where Daru is arrested and sets the tone of the episodes to follow. Adjectives like naked, rusted, drying and an uneasy shivering instil a sense of discomfort and uneasiness. Moreover shadows filling the cell of Daru confirm that his life had been surrounded by moments of despair. The use of first person pronoun in this and the chapters to follow make the account of events more personal, direct, plausible and convincing.

The first two chapters serve the purpose of a very brief prologue to the whole novel, quickly introducing the main characters and setting up the narrative to follow. After presenting a character behind the bars in chapter 1, chapter 2 gives a description of the court room and at the same time makes a mockery of the whole process of the trial as Hamid describes it in terms of a play to be staged by actors.

The analogy of enacting the trial scene is significant as the whole of the cast is laid out with their specific roles assigned to them. The narrator addresses the judge in a tone that characterizes a sense of complete mistrust. Murad Badshah, Ozi and Mumtaz are introduced for the first time in this chapter as witnesses in the trial of Daru:

Murad Badshah, the partner in crime: remorselessly large (a transferred epithet), staggeringly, stutteringly eloquent. Aurengzeb, the best friend: righteously treacherous, impeccably dressed, unfairly sexy. And radiant, moth-burning Mumtaz: wife, mother and lover. Three players in this trial of intimates, witnesses and liars all.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 7)

The use of these contradictory adjectives highlights the double and Janus-faced personalities of the characters described. All the hypocrites survive at the end of the novel whereas contradictory to them Daru, who remains candid even in his unlawful activities, is doomed. The change in narration is also marked with a change in writing style. It is important to note that whenever the narrator is omniscient the use of literary devices becomes more frequent. Hamid uses literary devices as a tool to show his understanding of various characters and uses them to explain their nature. Moreover such a prolific and abundant use of adjectives and poetic and stylistic devices makes the narration textually dense and helps to incorporate a more detailed description of the characters in the story. Daru, the protagonist, is also introduced in the same chapter as:

A hard man with shadowed eyes, manacled, cuffed, disheveled, proud, erect. A man capable of anything and afraid of nothing [...] He is the terrible almost-hero of a great story: powerful, tragic, and dangerous. He alone meets your eyes.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 8)

By using the rhetoric device of contrast, Hamid intensifies and emphasizes the characteristics he wants his characters to possess. Moreover an abundant use of punctuation marks, particularly when the narrator is giving some descriptions, makes the narration more dramatic. By using frequent pauses he breaks the flow of narration, highlights the point and makes the reader stop and think. The prosecutor's opening remarks about Daru are of great significance when he says that, 'He killed not out of anger, not out of scheme or plan or design. He killed as a serpent kills that which it does not intend to eat: he killed out of indifference' (Hamid, 2001, p. 8). The simile of 'serpent' is used to describe Daru here. Hamid has used alliteration and repetition to create a sense of the relentlessness and pointlessness of the kill. Hamid's poetics emphasise how Daru has become indifferent to society and he does not feel troubled when he murders someone.

Chapter three marks a meaningful progress in the novel. There is a temporal shift in the narrative as the narrator moves into the past with a detailed introduction of Ozi and Mumtaz, their big house, security guards, pajeros, servants and their lavish lifestyle. The stark difference in the life styles of Ozi and Daru is presented explicitly as Ozi is enjoying all the desired luxuries of life courtesy of his father's corruption and Daru is struggling very hard to keep pace with his friends who are the *nouveau riche* of the Pakistani society and have mostly amassed their wealth through unfair means. The reasons for Daru's anger and indifference towards the society start to become clear as his and Ozi's lifestyles and access to luxuries are contrasted. On his way to Ozi's place Daru is driving in his small Suzuki car and realizes:

There are trees by the side of the road, but only on the one side, and it's the wrong side, so their shadows run away from me in long smiles and jump over boundary walls and grin at each other while I bake in my car like a snail on hot asphalt.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 10)

Shadows are personified as smiling and grinning at Daru while he suffers in the unbearable heat of the summer. Daru is mostly described in terms of crawling, slimy and creeping creatures; one is poisonous (serpent) whereas the other is a useless scared little animal (snail). When he leaves Ozi's air-conditioned place and is back on the road, he is driving 'under the hot candle of a shadow-casting moon that's bigger and brighter and yellower than it should be. There are no clouds and no wind, and there are no stars because of the dust' (Hamid, 2001, p. 16). Every now and then Daru's life is described as surrounded and haunted by the shadows. Even moon is hot and casts shadows in Daru's life. Hamid has used imagery masterfully to serve his purpose and to show the contrast in Daru and Ozi's lives. Everything is generous and benign for the wealthy Ozi whereas everything around Daru appears to be hostile and unpleasant. In contrast to Ozi's huge mansion, Daru's own house is:

a grey cement block, more or less with rectangular windows, a couple of balconies too narrow to use, and the best bloody tree in the neighbourhood: a banyan that's been around forever and covers most of the dust patch I call my front lawn.

(Hamid, 2001, pp. 18-19)

Daru's house is too insignificant and monotonous to be noticed. Words like 'dust' and 'grey' are used repeatedly while describing Daru and his life as if there are no colours - or vibrancy - in it whatsoever.

Next morning when Daru reaches his office, a bank actually, his scuffle with Malik Jiwan, a megalomaniac feudal landlord, reveals the power structures of the Pakistani society. Daru's refusal to bear any insult from him and acknowledge his feudal hierarchy costs him his job. His words, 'I have had a bad day. A bad month, actually. And there's only so much nonsense a self-respecting fellow can be expected to take from these megalomaniacs' (Hamid, 2001, p. 22) show how the society is corrupted by these representatives of power like Malik Jiwan. He realizes that the society he is a part of does not appreciate such honest outbursts, particularly when addressed to those who own the resources.

Hamid uses commodities like cars and air-conditioners to highlight the fact that unequal access to resources has divided the society into many factions which has ultimately led to hatred and intolerance. Cars, air conditioners and access to other luxuries of life determine the social standing of an individual and Daru's inability to afford these makes him more resentful towards the society. On the same evening, when he is fired from his job, Daru goes to a party with Ozi and Mumtaz in Ozi's Pajero. Daru comments about Ozi's Pajero that it:

Costs more than my house and moves like a bull, powerful and single-minded. Ozi drives by pointing it in one direction and stepping on the gas, trusting that everyone will get out of the way. Occasionally, when he cuts things too close and has to swerve to avoid crushing someone, the pajero's engine grumbles with disappointment.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 25)

Ozi's belief that bigger cars have the right of way sums up the thinking of the rich. The wealthy and powerful believe that they own the resources and people around them. They demand to be treated on a priority basis, and expect others to give way,

whether as a bank client or while driving their gigantic cars on the roads. The difference in the life style of various characters from the different classes is used aptly by Hamid to highlight the socio-economic injustices in the Pakistani society and the resulting unrest. Descriptions of big houses, gigantic mansions, luxury cars and splendid parties are abundant in the novel and help to reveal the stark differences in the living standards of the rich and the poor. The venue of one such party 'is a mansion with marble floors and twenty foot ceiling. Rumour has it that the owner made his fortune as a smuggler' (Hamid, 2001, p. 29). It is important to note that Ozi's wealth is because of his father's corruption which could never be proved and the mansion where they have come to party also belongs to a smuggler. Nobody rich in *Moth Smoke* has earned his fortune through fair means. Daru, on the other hand, has recently lost his job and is uncertain of his future or any prospects of getting a respectable job. By contrasting the lifestyles of Daru on the one side and Ozi and Mumtaz on the other, Hamid highlights the class conflict that exists in Pakistan. Daru's small car, modest income in spite of his tiresome job and a small house seem meaningless when compared to Ozi's wealth courtesy his father's corruption. Daru's dissatisfaction with this class disparity and the uneven distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities in Pakistan is one of the main factors that push him towards unlawful activities to avenge the society.

When Daru compares himself to the youth enjoying these parties, his feelings of dissatisfaction with his own life becomes even starker. He wonders that 'Tattoos, ponytails, side burns, navel rings abound: this is it, this is cool, this is the Very Best

Party of the Off-Season. And I am single, with no job and no money, and no real hope of picking up anyone' (Hamid, 2001, p. 82). Any hope for a better future seems remote and he is made to realize time and again that his friends belong to a class which is very different from his own because of the huge difference in their financial status. Daru's frustration is symbolic of the wider feelings of unease and disgust towards the economic injustices in the Pakistani society. The realization of this difference is repeatedly expressed in terms of feelings of disgrace and unease. The injustice in availability of and access to opportunities and resources for different factions of the Pakistani society is highlighted well in *Moth Smoke* by contrasting these corrupt bureaucrats, feudal lords and businessmen with the struggling individuals like Daru belonging to the middle class. He roams around in such parties as an outsider and keeps on observing the life style the people were enjoying in a country that owned nuclear warheads but not enough resources to feed the poor. The sarcasm is acute in the description of such parties and grand houses of the corrupt bureaucrats and businessmen in Pakistan.

Daru reads an article to Mumtaz about the rebirth of a phoenix, written by Julius Superb, a Punjab University communist professor. The concluding line of the column sums up the evils of the capitalist system and resulting class difference in the Pakistani society as, 'in the end making the strong stronger, the weak weaker and the dangerous deadly?' (Hamid, 2001, p. 32). Daru himself is distressed on not finding a job. To add to his incapacity his electricity is also about to be disconnected due to non-payment of bills. At this moment, Murad Badshah visits him. Murad Badshah, a



rickshaw driver, is Daru's drug supplier, one of the narrators and also a witness in the court of trial against him. He is a Masters Degree holder and owns a rickshaw fleet. He is also boastful of his past criminal record and claims to be a murderer. His Marxist philosophies are not just limited to some frivolous thoughts rather he believes in action and justifies the poor's robbing those who possess. He claims:

When disparities become too great, a superior right, that to life, outweighs the right to property. Ergo, the very poor have the right to steal from the very rich. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the poor have a duty to do so, for history has shown that the inaction of the working classes perpetuates their subjugation.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 64)

Murad Badshah's words are uttered like an eloquent and rhetorical speech of a Marxist leader. Lower and middle classes are shown to be concerned, worried and fretting about their state of life and disparities in the Pakistani society whereas the upper class is completely indifferent and is nowhere shown to be concerned about the lives of the poor and needy around them. People like Murad Badshah represent those thinking in unlawful terms and finding it justified to rob the rich if they need to.

Finally Daru is called for an interview in a bank but that too is courtesy of his uncle's connections. Even though he could not get a job, the dialogue between Daru and Mr. Butt (the boss) is quite significant. It highlights the bad financial situation of the country:

I am meeting with you, to tell you the honest truth, as a favor to your uncle. Unless you know some big fish, and I mean someone whose name matters to a country head, no one is going to hire you. Not with the banking sector in the shape it's in .... I know your uncle. He's a good friend of mine. But if I were country head right now, I still wouldn't

be able to hire you. Things are tight these days and favours are expensive.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 53)

Chapter 6 marks a change in the narration of the novel. Instead of Daru, Murad Badshah narrates the events in this chapter. By introducing Murad Badshah, Hamid not only introduces a different perspective to the whole trial, he also brings forward a different viewpoint on the social injustices and disparities in Pakistan. The introduction of a different narrator furnishes the reader with an alternate view and helps him understand a different stratum of society. The whole narration of the *Moth Smoke* is divided into three layers with Daru representing the middle class, Ozi the upper class and Murad Badshah the lower class. They all contribute to the narration of the story and all seem justified and true to their cause. This oscillation between different narrators leaves the reader struggling for truth and keeps him on guard. The reader has to decide for himself whose story is more credible.

Murad Badshah narrates the account of robbing the boutique by him and Daru and the narration is full of robust imagery. Images of a dark and stormy night, lightening in the sky, crescent moon and dark streets warn that something ominous and fatal is about to happen. When Daru shoots a young boy during the robbery Murad Badshah exclaims that ‘Darashikoh Shehzad changed before my eyes’ (Hamid, 2001, p. 71). Daru, if given a chance, was probably the most promising individual of all the characters in the novel. He had been a boxing champion in his student life. His academic record was also brilliant and he was doing a research devising a plan to help the lower middle class by providing them with micro finance loans. Professor Julias Superb also praised him for his being different from rest of

the students and possessing analytical bent of mind. Unfortunately Daru becomes a victim of mercilessness of class war in Pakistan and his effort to take revenge on the elite class of the country leads to his downfall. As a character, Daru represents society's failure to fulfil the promise of its youthful generation.

Daru's problems increase as the story progresses and he gets more and more into using drugs and even drug peddling. The lack of jobs due to the economic recession in Pakistan also squeezes his chances to get hold of his life once again and he is forced to indulge in a life of crime in order to show his resentment towards social injustices. Hamid uses the power cut in Daru's house as a vehicle for social commentary:

Power prices have been rising faster than a banker's wages the last couple of years, thanks to privatization and the boom of guaranteed profit, project-financed, imported oil-fired electricity projects. I was happier when we had load-shedding five hours a day: at least then a man didn't have to be a millionaire to run his AC.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 73)

These words reflect the bitter emotions and experiences the Pakistani nation was going through because of hike in power prices and load shedding. The rich had created a world full of luxuries for themselves in a country which had become a victim of inflation, excessive load shedding and religious extremism. Professor Julius Superb's remarks about this class disparity on the basis of an important resource, air-conditioning, highlights the misery of the poor whereas the rich who are smugglers, mullahs, soldiers and industrialists:

wake up in air-conditioned houses, drive air-conditioned cars to air-conditioned offices, grab lunch in air-conditioned restaurants (right of admission reserved), and at the end of

the day go home to their air-conditioned lounges to relax in front of their wide-screen TVs.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 103)

*Moth Smoke* is a struggle of characters fighting for ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ and this struggle, and their consequent actions, shapes their future. The rich have managed to control the environment around them through air-conditioners whereas the poor suffer from the heat of the subcontinent. The word ‘air-conditioned’ is used five times, in this brief but realistic description of the elite class of Pakistan, to strengthen the point Hamid is trying to establish regarding the difference in the lifestyles and class disparity in the country. The rich have created their own world, through unlimited resources they possess, where they live and breathe peacefully. They are alienated and aloof from the poor as:

if they should think about the rest of the people, the great uncooled, and become uneasy as they lie under their blankets in the middle of the summer, there is always prayer, five times a day, which they hope will gain them admittance to an air-conditioned heaven, or, at the very least, a long, cool drink during a fiery day in hell.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 103)

There is no promise for the poor of Pakistan to feel any respite from the scorching heat of the summer or to enjoy any luxury of modern scientific advancement, at least while they are alive. Their life in this world is like a hell because of lack of resources and they might once again be living in hell, after death. A few pages later there is an interesting remark in the novel that, ‘Mumtaz was over-air-conditioned and longed to be uncooled, while Darashikoh was under-air-conditioned and longed to be cooled’ (Hamid, 2001, p. 107). It appears as if the lives of most of the characters are governed by their exposure to air-conditioning. Daru’s

mother dies because of the air conditioning, Mumtaz is suffering due to excess of resources whereas Daru is lacking in resources and struggling to get hold of something in order to have a better life. A death, a broken marriage, an extra-marital affair and the protagonist is made to suffer a lot just because of air-conditioning. Air-conditioning in this novel is used as a negative symbol. Macuuni's, Daru's servant, statement is very interesting in this regard that, 'All the ACs around here are making hot air' (Hamid, 2001, p. 110). This contradictory statement highlights the negative impact that an unequal distribution of resources can have on the people or the general masses.

At another party Daru takes some 'ex', a drug, and during his ecstatic condition runs away from everything around him.

I push against the tree and run away, stumbling, the unreal night playing with me, gravity pulling from below, behind, above, making me fall. And I run through a world that is rotating, conscious of the earth's spin, of our planet twirling as it careens through nothingness, of the stars spiralling above, of the uncertainty of everything, even ground, even sky.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 87)

Daru's fall is symbolic in these lines. He experiences unreality, nothingness and uncertainty around him. The stars, the planet, the ground and the sky all seem unreal. It is not the gravitational pull of the earth that is making him fall but the situation he is caught in and his helplessness and struggle in the capitalist Pakistani society. He feels as if everything is conspiring against him, falling apart and playing its part in his fall.

Hamid locates his narrative at a precise historical moment. In the midst of Daru's power cut, Ozi's grand socializing parties with the elite of Lahore and Daru's uncertain future, India goes nuclear. India's nuclear tests leave a deep impact on the life of Lahore in the novel. Sun shines 'brighter and hotter' than before and the people have become 'more edgy' (Hamid, 2001, p. 95). Hamid's use of the symbol of light is brilliant and unconventional. He has reversed the traditional meanings of the symbols of light and darkness. Where ever Hamid brings light into consideration, life becomes hard for Daru. Even sun is always hot and burning for Daru, depriving him of any relief in the summer of Lahore.

Daru, in the meantime, living in the absence of electricity and hence air-conditioning has found a new game for himself – killing moths with his badminton racquet. Sitting idle he kills moths during the nights and wonders about the love and hate relationship between the moth and the flame. The episode where Daru, along with his servant Manucci, watches the moth dying through love of the flame reveals the nature of Daur and Mumtaz's relationship with each other:

The moth takes off again, and we both step back, because he is circling at eye level now and seems to have lost rudder control, smacking into the wall on each round. He circles lower and lower, spinning around the candle in tighter revolutions, like a soap sud over an open drain. A few times he seems to touch the flame, but dances off unhurt. Then he ignites like a ball of hair, curling into an oily puff of fumes with a hiss. The candle flame flickers and dims for a moment, then burns as bright as before. Moth smoke lingers. I lift the candle and look around the mantelpiece for the moth's body, but I can't find it. For a moment I think I smell burning flesh, and even though I tell myself it must be my imagination. I put the candle down feeling more than a little disgusted.

(Hamid, 2001, pp. 138-139)

It is the love of the flame that makes the moth burn and embrace death. Similarly Daru is unable to resist his love for his best friend's wife, Mumtaz. Like the self-destructive love of the moth, both Daru and Mumtaz's lives are destroyed and devastated because of their love affair and at the end nothing remains except the smell of burning and moth-dust. When Daru and Mumtaz make love, Daru feels that, 'It's like someone's died...Afterwards, when she leaves me lying there, I smell the moth dust mixed in with her sweat and my sweat on my body' (Hamid, 2001, p. 146). Both Daru and Mumtaz are obsessed with each other's love as it makes them forget the world around them and they keep on encircling each other as moth becomes oblivious of the surroundings while playing the dangerous game of love. They have succeeded in creating an imaginary space for themselves where they can breathe and exist without being disturbed by the atrocities and injustices of the outside world. Daru comments:

She's drawn to me just as I'm drawn to her. She can't keep away. She circles, forced to keep her distance, afraid of abandoning her husband and, even more, her son for too long. But she keeps coming, like a moth to my candle, staying longer than she should, leaving late for dinners and birthday parties, singeing her wings. She's risking her marriage for me, her family, her reputation. And I, the moth circling her candle, realize that she is not just a candle. She's a moth as well, circling me. I look at her and see myself reflected, my feelings, my desires. And she, looking at me, must see herself. And which of us is moth and which is candle, hardly seems to matter. We are both the same.

(Hamid, 2001, p. 204)

Daru thinks of himself as if he is the flame and has the power to kill the moths around him. Unfortunately what he does not realize is that he was also the moth at

the same time and his obsession with resources, drugs and Mumtaz leads to his burning, and his death.

Mumtaz calls herself a 'monster' (Hamid, 2001, p. 153) while talking about her lack of feelings towards her newly born son. She wants freedom, wants to work full time but Ozi is not willing to let her do so. She works secretly and starts writing for a newspaper under a pseudonym Zulfiqar Manto. Her choice of a male pseudonym is also symbolic in the patriarchal Pakistani society. Through the act of role reversal and assuming a male identity for herself, she finds a secret way of exercising authority over the people around her. She refuses to take care of her son, neglects Ozi as a wife and makes Daru burn as a moth with the flame of her love.

Daru's meeting with the fundo (fundamentalist), an acquaintance from his college, highlights another challenge faced by the Pakistani society. Fundo invites Daru to a meeting of 'like-minded people' (Hamid, 2001, p. 225) who are working to bring a change in the political system of the country. Daru recognizes his being a fundamentalist and decides not to go to the meeting. Social injustices and economic disparities in Pakistan have led to various kinds of reactions from various factions of the society. Religious extremism is one such reaction and the people who are hopeless of any improvement in their lives from the current political system are looking towards more active and aggressive options. The failure of democracy in Pakistan, politicians' corruption, US role in the geo-political instability in Pakistan and Afghanistan<sup>34</sup> and connivance between military and various religious parties

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<sup>34</sup> Hamid, in one of his journalistic pieces in the *Guardian*, remarked:



have allowed religious extremist forces to fill the void with the promise of a better life. But it is interesting to note that Daru, in spite of the entire crisis he is going through, rejects the invitation from the fundo and does not join hands with religious extremism. Even though Daru has rejected the Islamic fundamentalism as an option to take revenge from the society yet there are a large number of cases in Pakistan where unemployed and desperate youths have been lured by the extremists.

A day before Daru goes to rob a boutique, sitting in his home; he sees a lizard strutting on the wall of his room with its eyes focused on a moth. Daru observed:

The lizard steps forward...But dinner doesn't seem to think of itself as dinner...Slowly, with no hurry at all, the lizard takes the moth into its mouth and squeezes. Only now does dinner realize it is dinner, one wing trembling frantically until it breaks off and fall like a flower petal, twirling."  
(Hamid, 2001, p. 227)

Daru's situation is also like the moth which is unaware of the devastating fate approaching him with her jaws open to engulf him just like the lizard ate the moth. Daru murders a young boy while robbing a boutique but is arrested by the police for the murder of the boy who is crushed by Ozi's Land Cruiser.

*Moth Smoke*, as a paracolonial text, can be read as a protest against class disparity, unjustified access and distribution of resources on the one hand and dissatisfaction with the decaying and degenerating socio-cultural milieu of the country on the other. Being a tale of class conflict, illicit love affair, drug parties, the

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[...] when Pakistan signed up as America's ally in the West's last war in Afghanistan, the war against the Soviets, Pakistan was rewarded with billions of dollars of military hardware and economic aid. But Pakistan paid a price: heroin flooded our cities, Kalashnikovs became common on our streets and young boys were left trained for jihad instead of university. (Hamid, 2001)

strained geo-political situation between India and Pakistan and financial and moral corruptions, *Moth Smoke* can be said to be a novel which represents a transitory phase not only for Pakistan but also for the Anglophone Pakistani fiction. Hamid, through his fictional and non-fictional writings, has been discussing the political, social and economic issues that Pakistan has faced during the last two decades. Instead of falling back on the grand historical narratives, he has focused more on the representation of the contemporary Pakistan with all her crises and struggles. Hamid tries to present various social narratives and makes them compete through his writings. *Moth Smoke* (2001) dissects the Pakistani society struggling to cope with staggering economy and rising religious extremism. The novel goes on to raise questions about the economic injustices that the lower classes have to suffer at the hands of more powerful and resourceful upper class of the country. Hamid's *Moth Smoke* occupies a distinctive place among Pakistani fiction as Hamid sets out to explore the contemporary Lahore and portrays the Pakistani nation state and its youth struggling to formulate a stable identity for them. His next novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008), takes his agenda to one next level where he, instead of focusing on the indigenous social and economic conflicts, shifts his gaze to the crises that Pakistan is facing on the international level. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) is a continuation of *Moth Smoke* in a sense that issues, like religious extremism, that Hamid had raised in his first novel are now haunting the country. The novel not only deals with 9/11, a moment of international crisis, but also negotiates

with the West's stereotyping of Pakistan and the Pakistani nation as terrorists and religious extremists.

## **5.2: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist: The Terror(ist) Writes Back***

Written against the backdrop of the 9/11, USA's War on Terror and rise of religious extremism in Pakistan, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) unfolds the story of a Pakistani young man Changez. The novel is about his life as a successful US immigrant, his alienation in the US society after 9/11 and lastly his becoming an Islamic fundamentalist. The dichotomy of Changez's personality is split between his being a successful US immigrant and, at the same time, a native of a politically and economically troubled postcolonial nation. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008), as a paracolonial novel, urges its readers to revisit and redefine some of the most fundamental and relevant issues the world has to cope within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the early post-9/11 days, the fiction written in response to this apocalyptic and catastrophic event was largely focused on the trauma experienced either by the victims of 9/11 or the US nation and largely ignored its impacts on Pakistan and rest of the Muslim world. Sarah Ilott (2014) argues:

A plethora of fictional texts – including Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Patrick McGrath's *Ghost Town* (2005), to mention just a few – have centred on Western narratives of trauma and loss at the hands of a small band of “fundamentalists” who are often figured as threatening the West's very mode of existence.

(Ilott, 2014, p. 571)

It failed to acknowledge that, ‘American life has continued at an unabated pace – whereas life in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan has been radically destabilized’ (Singh, 2012, p. 1). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) intervenes into the norms of this fiction and presents the world with an alternate viewpoint on the post-9/11 world. Rothberg (2009) argues in favour of a body of, ‘fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship’ (Rothberg, 2009, p. 154) that explores various facets of US citizenship and issues of immigrant communities in a multicultural world. Stephens (2011) in *Beyond Imaginative Geographies? Critique, Co-optation, and Imagination in the Aftermath of the War on Terror* contends that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) makes use of the imperialist strategies and instead of challenging or disrupting, endorses the split imaginative geographies of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and through this split dissects the US nation and government’s response to 9/11 and War on Terror. Hamid’s fiction, along with his non-fictional writings appearing in the Western newspapers,<sup>35</sup> presents a strong case for Pakistan as a country of moderate and progressive individuals. By weaving his story around a terrorist incident in USA, Hamid tries to define a pre- and post-9/11 world; locate the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism; the US role in War on Terror; construction of stereotypical identities for the Muslims and the crisis of Muslim diaspora communities in USA, particularly after 9/11.

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<sup>35</sup> Hamid, along with Shamsie, is a regular contributor of columns in the British newspaper the *Guardian*. The titles of his columns [Pakistan Must not be Abandoned (2001), Mohsin Hamid: Islam is not a Monolith (2013), Pakistan is being shaped by popular will as never before (2009) and Bound by Sorrows (2008)] highlight his anxiety over the faltering socio-political situation of Pakistan.

Changez, the homodiegetic narrator, narrates the whole story in the form of a monologue to an unidentified silent US listener, in a tea cafe at the famous Anarkali Market of Lahore. In first person narration, the story is mostly told in simple past tense. The present tense, although used for lesser part of the novel, yet employs a tactful use to refer to the details of the surroundings of where and when the story is being told. This sudden shift in the tense of narration serves the purpose of foregrounding, making the reader confront a sudden change and deviation in the mode of narration which keeps them attentive to the changes both on the textual and the thematic levels of the story. Furthermore, by employing this tactic of shifting between the present and the past tense Hamid keeps the narrative oscillating between two different temporalities at the same time. The story told in the past tense gives an account of various events whereas the shift to the present tense furnishes Changez's interpretations of those events. By doing so, Hamid not only provides the reader with the details of his protagonist's journey from an ambitious immigrant to an Islamic fundamentalist but also adds a contemplative perspective to the whole story. The present tense further helps to understand various acts and decisions of the protagonist, made in the past, at some very crucial moments in his life. Morey (2013) argues that by using this sudden shift in the use of present and past tense and through confessional and dramatic monologue forms:

[...] the novel not only effectively parodies the cultural certainties encouraged by those "true confessions" of former radicals, in destabilizing the reader's identification through hyperbole, strategic exoticization, allegorical layering and unreliable narration, but also defamiliarizes our relation to literary projects of national identification, forcing us to be

the kind of deterritorialized reader demanded by the emerging category of world literature.

(Morey, 2013, p. 136)

Hamid uses the form of dramatic monologue not only to foreground his side of the story but also to keep the identity of his US interlocutor a secret for the readers. Glennis Byron also asserts that, '[t]he dramatic monologue, with its absence of any clear guiding authorial voice, seems particularly designed to provoke reader response' (Byron, 2003, p. 21). The decision rests with the readers' imagination to guess whether he is a US agent or just a tourist who happens to encounter Changez in Lahore's Anarkali market. Moreover, further ambiguity persists throughout the narrative whether it is the US agent who is sent to kill Changez or is it Changez who is looking for an opportune moment, either to kill or abduct the US citizen. Morey (2013) elaborates that in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) the form's, 'one-sidedness actually performs that archetypal novelistic trick of taking us inside the head of the character but, in so doing, refusing the normalizing consolation of a dialogue' (Morey, 2013, p. 139). This ambiguity in identifying the predator and the prey is unsettling throughout the novel. This ambiguity replicates the difficulties and uncertainty regarding the identification of the enemy in War on Terror. The terrorists, the biggest threat to the modern civilization, move along freely without being identified and attack on their will.

The novel begins with Changez's success story in USA, first at Princeton University and later at a valuation firm, Underwood Samson & Company. He introduces himself to the unnamed US person as someone who was eager to succeed and willing to share the US ways of life. The opening sentence of the novel, 'Excuse

me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of USA' (Hamid, 2008, p. 1) establishes the binary of USA versus anti-USA right at the beginning. Hamid reverses the actual political hierarchy within the text where Changez, a Pakistani Muslim, gets the voice and his US auditor is silenced. By reversing the power structures of the actual binary of the US and non-US, Hamid marginalizes and hence *subalternises* the silent US listener, depriving him of any chance to interrupt or mould his narrative. Moore (2009) in *British Muslim Identities and Spectres of Terror in Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers* suggests that, 'a writer implicated by virtue of his cultural affiliations in national and transnational constructions of Islam might manipulate the discourse of the War on Terror to his artistic benefit (Moore, 2009, p. 1). Hamid is also using his national and religious affiliations to present a case of an enlightened and progressive Pakistan to his Western readers by creating a counter-argument to the post-9/11 hegemonic Western discourse.

The paracolonial Pakistani fiction writers are using events of global significance like 9/11, atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima and War on Terror not only to challenge institutionalized acts of violence but also to question the role of various national symbols in deepening the already existing divide between different nations and communities. Instead of being subdued because of their peripheral and marginalized status, they are exploiting their position to deconstruct, analyze and respond to a more powerful discourse that constructs them and their nation as terrorist suspects and possible threat to the rest of the world. When



Changez offers his US listener, ‘Come, if it makes you more comfortable, let me switch my cup with yours’ (Hamid, 2008, p. 13), he captures his US interlocutor’s position of authority and vantage. This act of switching their cups is basically an act of role reversal when, unlike the actual political hierarchy, the US listener is pushed in a defensive position whereas the fundamentalist becomes the aggressive player.

The novel creates and maintains an atmosphere of post-9/11 sense of threat right from the beginning. Geo-political tension in the region, Pakistan being labelled as a safe haven for terrorists and an ever-present threat of terrorist activities by Taliban in the country had a deep impact not only on the whole society but also on the literary intelligentsia. The paracolonial Pakistani fiction highlights this faltering socio-political situation and tries to deconstruct anti-Pakistan Western discourse. 9/11 not only changed the socio-political milieu of Pakistan, it had also sabotaged the US belief of absolute power and control over the rest of the world. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* highlights the need for an increased security felt by USA and the divide of the West and non-West that became more stark and visible. In relation to the crumbling post-9/11 US world Ray suggests:

9/11 is the date when the nation must gather for an unqualified reflection on the “us and them” divide; 9/11 is the date that reminds citizens of the necessity for homeland security, for the denial of civil liberties to those that refuse to become us.

(Ray, 2005, p. 576)

The attack was not only symbolic of undermining of the US military and economic hegemony but also of the fact that anti-US forces were gaining strength as the, ‘separation of civil and non-civil spaces were being demarcated and maintained by

the other despite the best efforts of a US government to maintain world order' (Ray, 2005, p. 576). The people of the USA had become suspicious of the rest of the world and feelings of insecurity mark their behaviours. During the conversation at the tea stall when a waiter approaches their table to seek order, Changez realizes the concerns of his US listener and assures him of his safety:

You seem worried. Do not be; this burly fellow is merely our waiter, and there is no need to reach under your jacket. I assume to grasp your wallet, as we will pay him later, when we are done.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 6)

Changez's assumption that his US interlocutor is reaching under his jacket for his wallet makes the whole situation more suspicious as he might have been trying to get hold of a hidden gun. Similarly when the tea arrives Changez reassures his interlocutor again of the improbability of any untoward thing happening to him:

Ah, our tea has arrived! Do not look so suspicious. I assure you, sir, nothing untoward will happen to you, not even a runny stomach. After all, it is not as if it has been *poisoned*.

(Hamid, 2008, pp. 12-13)

His US interlocutor's continuous apprehension for his safety and his surroundings punctuate the narrative. Whenever the story returns to the present tense, the surroundings offer some threatening images and characters for the US interlocutor.

Hamid's use of pronouns is also important showing the shifting distance between him and his US interlocutor. In these two brief quotes, Hamid has used the pronoun 'we' twice for himself and the US listener. Changez is associating himself with the US interlocutor. Even though both are suspicious of each other's intentions, Changez's nostalgia of his past in USA overpowers his suspicions. He feels like his

early days in USA when he was willing and excited to become a part of and get absorbed in the US way of life. Moreover by using the pronoun 'we' Changez is trying to develop an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between the two. Changez, as ideal *other* who is Americanized, Westernized and more 'us' than 'them' yet, 'dangerous enough, perhaps, to warrant assassination, is someone capable of negotiation, of discourse, of politesse and protocol' (Chan, 2010, p. 830) argues Stephen Chan in *The Bitterness of the Islamic Hero in Three Recent Works of Fiction*. Hamid makes full use of minor characters and the setting to build a sense of alarm and threat and then maintains it throughout the novel. The US interlocutor sitting very 'close to the wall' (Hamid, 2008, p. 2), his reaching 'under his jacket' (Hamid, 2008, p. 6) when the burly waiter approaches and bearded men (Hamid, 2008, p. 29) hovering around them are some such examples. Moreover with the story heading towards its unfinished and ambiguous ending the sun also sets, leaving them more prone to darkness and what it might hold. Changez's extra polite and over-assuring narrative voice is none the less more suspicious. Moreover the use of words like 'predator', 'prey' and 'lengthening shadows' (Hamid, 2008, p. 35) also adds to the element of threat in the whole situation. Changez's descriptions of his surroundings are replete with ominous signs. As the night approaches, the bats also appear hovering above their heads and Changez compares them to himself and his US interlocutor as, 'they are successful urban dwellers, like you and I, swift enough to escape detection and canny enough to hunt among a crowd' (Hamid, 2008, pp. 72-73). By using such imagery and symbols, Hamid succeeds in maintaining a

continuous atmosphere of alarm, ambiguity and uncertainty which never allows the reader to lower their guard and feel at ease throughout the act of reading.

This act, of shifting the marginalized to the centre, empowers Hamid's protagonist who narrates his story with control and authority. The novel uses the diegetic space between the three parties involved in the development of the plot; the narrator (Pakistani), the listener (US) and the reader. Even though Changez addresses the silent US listener sitting next to him yet the implicit addressee of the text can be assumed to be the larger US audience and the West in general whose stereotypical interpretations of Pakistan and its people Hamid intends to challenge. Along with his US listener Hamid also wants his Western readers to lower their guard while listening to his tale, his side of the story. By exploiting the binary of 'us' versus 'them' Hamid gets the US and the fundamentalists' narratives to compete and forces the readers, the implicit addressees, to draw their own interpretations and conclusions out of it. The abundant use of the pronouns 'us' and 'them' suggests the distance Changez realizes on various occasions while he is in USA. His description of the US policy of recruiting the best minds, from all over the world, in their universities is revealing of the divide and the distance that exists between USA and the rest of the world:

Looking back now, I see the power of that system, pragmatic and effective, like so much else in USA. We international students were sourced from around the globe Until the best and the brightest of us had been indentified [...] we were expected to contribute our talents to your society, the society we were joining. And for the most part, we were happy to do so. I certainly was, at least at first.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 4)

Now when he is back in Pakistan and contemplates on his past life in USA he realizes how he, along with many others, was exploited and selected to serve the US interests. USA's pragmatic exploitation of talent from other countries places all other nations at the fringes from where the best and the brightest are selected and exploited to strengthen and benefit the centre. The pages to follow further exploit this binary and the tale goes on to discuss its repercussions in the form of Islamic fundamentalism, religious extremism and its back lash on USA.

Changez while working at Underwood Samson & Company was exposed to and trained in the art of US capitalism. Underwood Samson with its first letters 'U' and 'S' represents United States and is determined to amass more and more financial profit by focusing on the fundamentals of business. Hamid interprets Islamic fundamentalism as a backlash of the US capitalist policies. His critique of the US capitalism, throughout the text, constructs a cause and effect relationship between the US capitalist strategies and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism where the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a phenomenon is caused by the US capitalism. Hamid finds these strategies replicated in Islamic fundamentalism but the gains have changed with a focus on rejuvenation and supremacy of Islam.

The Islamic world has suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and capitalism during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Towards the end of the twentieth century Islamic Terrorism replaced the Soviet Communism as the biggest threat to the US world, argues Bruce King (2007) in *The Image of United States in Three Pakistani Novels*. In his analysis of the three novels, *The Reluctant*

*Fundamentalist* (2008), *Broken Verses* (2005) and *No Space for Further Burials* (2007), King implies that Pakistani writers are, 'perhaps more concerned with identity and insecurities than the authors acknowledge' (King, 2007, p. 684). Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations were initially trained by the US and the Pakistani military forces to counter the Russian invasion in Afghanistan. After the fall of the Soviets and USA becoming the sole superpower of the world, these militants were left to cause havoc in Afghanistan where they gained strength, accumulated resources and finally attacked USA accusing the country and its policies as anti-Islamic. King (2007) further argues that Hamid's discourse is highly anti-US as he criticizes USA for using imperialist policies against the Third World countries to maintain its supremacy. But he also criticizes Hamid for failing to acknowledge the terrorist activities by the Islamists based in Pakistan and failure of the Pakistani state to curb such militant organizations operating from within the borders of the country. He is critical of the Pakistani fiction writers' naive treatment of the issues like Islamic fundamentalism and religion. He believes that complications in defining their own identity, as they divide their lives between Pakistan and the West, and the dangers associated with criticizing Islamists in Pakistan might have led to their simplistic approach towards Islamic fundamentalism. Changez, the protagonist, used the word 'fundamentals' repeatedly to describe the driving force behind the profit earning policies of Underwood Samson & Company. While describing his duties at the firm Changez says, '*Focus on the fundamentals.* [original emphasis] This was Underwood Samson's guiding principle, drilled into us since our first day at work'

(Hamid, 2008, p. 112). Hart and Hansen (2008) also point out that, ‘Changez’s story is about the resurgence of inter-national politics from within the carapace of globalisation and the post-political’ (Hart and Hansen, 2008, pp. 510-11).

After 9/11, while he is caught off guard in the struggle between his US and Pakistani self, he submerges himself in his work at Underwood Samson and says that, ‘I suspect I was never better at the pursuit of fundamentals that I was at that time, analyzing data as though my life depended on it’ (Hamid, 2008, p. 132). And finally when he makes his decision to leave his job at the firm and go back to Pakistan, he comments that his ‘days of focusing on fundamentals were done’ (Hamid, 2008, p. 175). Contrary to this he never uses the word fundamentals for the religious extremists. Changez’s recurrent references to fundamentals and his association of these with Underwood Samson highlight his belief that the US capitalist policies of ruling the world markets are not only a form of economic fundamentalism but are also more ruthlessly implemented than religious fundamentalists in their pursuits. During the process of creating their hegemony in the world markets, USA itself trained individuals in the art of focusing on the fundamentals, who now have become a threatening group, determined to challenge the US narrative of progress and hegemony. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) is also the story of such an individual who, rising from the margins but trained in the ways of the centre, is challenging the credibility of the centre itself. Thus Hamid, by contrasting these competing narratives within the text, symbolizes a larger struggle for supremacy between the two competing forces on the global scale.

Even though the issues of terrorism or fundamentalism are not directly touched upon in the early chapters, the novel establishes a divide between ‘us’ (Pakistanis) and ‘them’ (US). While reflecting on his early days in USA, Changez laments the deteriorating financial situation of the middle class of Pakistan and draws comparisons between the lives in two countries. He wonders in discomfort and comments:

Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize USA were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unplanned, unsanitary affairs, and USA had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budgets for education. To be reminded of this vast disparity was, for me, to be ashamed.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 38)

Such striking differences between the two countries make him resentful. Belonging to a country that fails to capitalize on its centuries’ old civilization and has gradually deteriorated to the level of a failed state, makes him feel sad and ashamed. But at the same time he relishes the fact that both USA and Pakistan were a former British colony and both share some characteristics of the once colonized nation. He wonders:

Why my mannerism so appealed to my senior colleagues. Perhaps it was my speech: like Pakistan, USA is, after all, a former English colony, and it stands to reason, therefore, that an Anglicized accent may in your country continue to be associated with wealth and power, just as it is in mine.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 47)

Changez is frustrated by the contrast in the abundance of opportunities that he finds in USA compared to the deteriorating economy of his native country. The struggling middle class of Pakistan, when seen against the backdrop of strong economy of USA, has become a source of discomfort and frustration for him. But he



is willing, for the moment, to suppress these troubling thoughts and exploit the opportunities for a better future promised to him by Underwood and Samson. He secures a job with a bonus and ludicrous pay and meets a beautiful girl Erica on a holiday in Greece. His ambitions are driving him towards a successful life with intermittent episodes of discomfort where he is made to realize the deteriorating socio-economic situation of his native country. During one such episode Erica's father asks him about Pakistan and then himself sums up the whole situation as:

Economy's falling apart though, no? Corruption, dictatorship, the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers. Solid people, don't get me wrong. I like Pakistanis. But the elite has raped the place well and good, right? And fundamentalism. You guys have some serious problems with fundamentalism.

(Hamid, 2008, pp. 62-63)

Even though Changez cannot disagree with Erica's father's remarks yet he finds his tone as 'typically American undercurrent of condescension' (Hamid, 2008, p. 63) that he also finds in 'the short news items on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*' (Hamid, 2008, p. 63). Erica's father's remarks about Pakistan are a good example of the US attitude to Pakistan and Pakistani society which, according to Changez has been created by the Western media and newspapers. The sentence structure of this small paragraph also reveals the attitude of a common US citizen towards Pakistan and the Pakistanis. The question marks used, in the above quote, are not intended to put forward a query but rather as a tool to assert one's point with more power and authority. The use of word 'you' for Pakistanis further confirms the presence of the distance between 'us' and 'them' and Changez is also declared a member of the

Pakistani clan. All his efforts to become a member of the US society are rejected with the use of a second person pronoun, 'you'.

Changez is in Manila, along with Jim and other office colleagues, on an official assignment when the 9/11 incident takes place. He watches the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre collapsing one after the other and 'smiled' (Hamid, 2008, p. 83). Changez's initial reaction to 9/11 is of great significance as it reveals the discomfort he has faced in USA for being a Pakistani. He recalls the moment as, 'I was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone has so visibly brought USA to her knees' (Hamid, 2008, p. 83). Changez is unsure of his affiliations at this moment of historic significance. His cultural and religious ties make him smile on USA's symbolic fall whereas the US part of his self is concerned about the safety of Erica and others in New York. He is unable to discern whether he is a victim during the whole episode or the attacker. This confusion in identifying himself either with the victims or the perpetrators of violence triggers the feelings of dissatisfaction and disillusionment with his life in USA. His reaction signifies the conflict between his religious ties and the Western culture he has internalized during his stay in USA. At this moment Changez himself is unsure of the metamorphosis he is undergoing and feels perplexed at his reactions.

The distance and the divide, between himself and USA, are getting wider and wider. Hamid's narration of his life in USA, prior to 9/11, is that of an all-embracing culture, of which Changez is also eager to become a part of. Having secured a job and a girlfriend, things were moving in the right direction for him but 9/11 changed the

world around him. There is clear difference in the way Hamid uses pronouns in the narration of the pre- and post-9/11 story. Before 9/11 Changez uses the pronoun 'we' many times to refer to himself and his US listener hence expressing an association with USA and the US people. But in the post-9/11 narration the use of first person pronoun by Changez refers to himself and the Pakistanis whereas the US listener and other US people are continuously referred to with the second person pronoun. This change in the use of the pronouns is used as a narrative strategy by Hamid to highlight the increasing distance between the West (with USA being synonymous with West) and the non-West. Changez realizes that he is an outsider in USA and this realization is highlighted through a change in the use of the pronouns in the narration of the story. Changez is separated from his US colleagues at the airport, made to remove all his clothes and subjected to absurd, humiliating and detailed investigations by the airport security staff. Finally when allowed to leave the airport, he recalls, 'I rode to Manhattan that evening very much alone' (Hamid, 2008, p. 86). New York, where he always felt like being at home, has stamped him as a potential terrorist suspect. In the days to follow Changez is subjected to verbal abuses and threatening glances from the passersby. The US people want him to realize that they were, '*the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath*' (Hamid, 2008, p. 90). It is not just USA that is changing and becoming more aggressive in asserting its power and authority over the world but Changez is also on the verge of a change. USA has invaded Afghanistan and Changez finds himself infuriated when he sees the 'partisan and sports-event-like'

media coverage of Afghanistan's invasion by the US troops (Hamid, 2008, p. 113). Changez feels infuriated over the plight of weak and helpless Afghan tribesmen facing the most advanced weaponry of the US forces. The feeling of belonging to a weaker and poorer nation is disturbing for Changez and while comparing Pakistan with USA he thinks of the former as a probable failed state and voices his frustration:

We currently lack wealth, power, or even sporting glory. [...] we were not always burdened by debt, dependant on foreign aid and handouts; in the stories we tell ourselves we were not the crazed and destitute radicals you see on your television channels but rather saints and poets and – yes – conquering kings. *We* built the Royal Mosque and the Shalimar Gardens in this city, and we built the Lahore Fort with its mighty walls and wide ramps for our battle elephants. And we did these things when your country was still a collection of thirteen small colonies, gnawing away at the edge of a continent.

(Hamid, 2008, pp. 115-116)

Hamid once again refers to the pre-colonial era in search of a past glory. I argue that such references in the paracolonial Pakistani fiction are not only to highlight the material glory of the Muslim dynasty in the subcontinent but are also used to challenge the Western gaze towards Pakistanis as a nation of suspect terrorists. Changez's description of his country's past glory and comparison with USA is noteworthy as he takes refuge in the glorious past of his land and nation. Changez is trying to protect his people who are not religious fanatics but poets and saints. They are more interested in constructing the world rather destroying it. Unfortunately in order to defend his people against their current stereotypical identity of being terrorists, he has to fall back on the past as the popular discourse of today stereotypes them as a possible threat to human civilization.

9/11 changed the world in many ways. It not only changed the face of world politics but also redefined and challenged the validity of the concepts like globalism and multiculturalism. Hartnell explores the possible threats to US multicultural society in the post-9/11 world and argues:

...the chauvinistic and racially charged atmosphere it describes after 9/11 is merely an intensification of something that was already there before. Yet this something is much more complex than a failure to fully embrace multiculturalism...The post-9/11 escalation of inter-ethnic tensions portrayed in the novel occasions the need to simultaneously recognize and police certain individuals and groups who threaten it

(Hartnell, 2010, p. 340)

In the post-9/11 world Islam became synonymous with jihad, legitimizing the killings of non-Muslims and inflicting terror upon the world. Western electronic and print media gave stories about terrorist networks of various Muslim terrorist organizations and mujahedeen getting military training in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Islam was stereotyped as a religion of terror and Muslims as terrorists. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) provides an alternative narrative to the popular rhetoric of the post-9/11 world. Published after almost seven years of 9/11, it gives a contemplative and explorative account of the incident and the times after.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) provides a critique of, 'the melting pot conception of the US society in its manifestations both before and after 9/11' (Hartnell, 2011, p. 337). Hamid's narrative furnishes its readers with an investigation and deconstruction of the US nationalism in a post-9/11 era. Anna Hartnell (2010) in *Moving Through USA: Race, Place and Resistance in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist* argues that a simplistic reading of the narrative establishes

the view that even though 9/11 did not initiate the older forms of European colonialism under the aegis of the US empire, it reinforced the whole concept. She identifies that Hamid's perspective is much more complicated and conflicted as, 'Hamid's Pakistani migrant protagonist is not simply alienated but also simultaneously drawn to the isolationist and exceptionalist currents of the American national narrative' (Hartnell, 2011, p. 337). By exploring the 'melting pot conception of American society' she concludes that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) not only, provides a commentary on post-9/11 USA, it also, 'offers a comment on the introspective tendencies of the post-9/11 novel itself' (Hartnell, 2011, p. 345).

Unlike the stories published in the print media or documentaries telecasted through electronic media, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) tries to highlight the conflicts in an ordinary Muslim who gets affected by the world changing around him. By presenting the terrorist as a conflicted and contemplative person, the novel not only voices the hitherto silenced individual but also questions the simplicity of the popular narrative, an important characteristic of paracolonialism. Furthermore, the novel not only disturbs the political hierarchy within the text but also reverses the characteristics associated with both the countries; USA and Pakistan, in the post-9/11 world. Pakistan which was the land bereft of any opportunities for progress and advancement becomes a reason of proud national identity and affiliations whereas USA that promised a successful life turns into a site of racist abuse and social injustice. By highlighting the stark religious and national divisions in the post 9/11

world, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) suggests that may be it is time to take a pause and think about alternative routes for civilization.

Names of the various characters chosen by Hamid are also significant for the symbolism they carry. Erica or (Am)Erica, Chris or Chris(t) or Chris(tianity) and Changez (named after a popular warrior) all work towards giving deeper meanings to the story through their symbolism. Changez's infatuation with Erica symbolizes his desire for a successful life in USA. After the 9/11 incident Erica and Changez's relationship starts to deteriorate parallel to the Pakistani Muslims' life becoming difficult in USA. Morey, while highlighting this name symbolism in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, argues:

However, viewed another way – and remembering the shifty nature of our focalizer – it can be read as consistent with the novel's constant attention to fiction-making...Are these characters real? Are we even *supposed* to believe in them and in Changez's recollections? Or are they concocted for the benefit of his suspicious US auditor, part of a tale spun in order to reel him in ahead of the bloody denouement that may take place beyond the final page?

(Morey, 2011, pp. 140-141)

By questioning the authenticity of his narrative, Hamid challenges the whole Western media discourse as constructed and its various facets politically motivated. This symbolism progresses as the plot of the story moves forward and furnishes the novel with a symbolic pattern helping to understand the narrative on a more personal level. The symbolism of these names further merges the personal with the political and provides more than one perspective to the story. Moreover, all the characters are rooted in their past and express a longing for the glory of their past. Erica's longing for Chris signifies her desire for the Christian roots, which stopped USA from falling

apart, and Changez tries to hold on to the glorious past of the Muslim rulers of the Subcontinent. He recalls his own family's past financial strength. Even his descriptions of Lahore are picked from the Mughal time period and not of the Lahore from the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This desire for returning to past was common both in Erica and Changez and like other similarities this desire for past is another point where Hamid places both the countries side by side. While describing his post-9/11 days to his US listener, Changez describes USA's taking refuge in nostalgia of the past as:

It seemed to me that USA, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time[...]I had always thought of USA as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by its determination to look back. Living in New York was suddenly like living in a film about the Second World War.

(Hamid, 2008, pp. 130-131)

And then he goes on to wonder, 'whether that era was fictitious, and whether – if it could indeed be animated – it contained a part written for someone like me' (Hamid, 2008, p. 131). Amidst all this chaos and wondering, Changez returns to Pakistan during Christmas holidays. A week earlier some armed men attack the Indian parliament and India and Pakistan are on the verge of another war. Despite all the support and assistance that Pakistan has provided USA in Afghanistan, Changez's whole family is sure that, 'USA would not fight at our side' (Hamid, 2008, p. 144). All this political turmoil and uncertainty and the feeling of being an outsider in USA start to frustrate Changez. He starts to feel as if he is betraying not only his family but also his countrymen. Struggling with such thoughts he wonders:

What sort of man abandons his people in such circumstances? And what was I abandoning them for? A well-paying job and a woman whom I longed for but who



refused even to see me? I grappled with these questions again and again.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 145)

Tensions between India and Pakistan, and the latter not getting any support from USA, lead to Changez's disenchantment and the final blow to his dream of becoming a successful US immigrant. The realization of being an outsider in the US society begins with 9/11 but USA betraying his native country at the moment of crisis completely dismantles his myth of a perfect and democratically progressive USA. On his return to New York, he grows a two-week-old beard as a symbol of his identity, resistance and anger. But his beard leads him to go through a whole new lot of experiences as his beard reminds the US people of those who had attacked their sovereignty. He wonders how a small thing can change a person's life and describes the reaction of the US people to his beard as:

It is remarkable, given its physical insignificance – it is only a hairstyle, after all – the impact a beard worn by a man of any complexion has on your fellow countrymen. More than once, travelling on the subway – where I had always had the feeling of seamlessly blending in – I was subjected to verbal abuses by complete strangers, and at Underwood Samson I seemed to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 148)

Changez has started to feel more and more of an outsider in USA. He goes to see Erica who is admitted in a recovery health centre. He asks her to come with him but she refuses. Erica's refusal to accept Changez is basically USA's refusal to accept Changez as one of her own. With this burden of rejection Changez lands in Santiago to evaluate a publishing company where he meets an old man, Juan Bautista, the chief of the publishing company. Changez has lost all his passion for work. Instead

he is indulged in reading news about the political situation in Pakistan. USA has disappointed him by not taking a stand against India and in favour of Pakistan. During a discussion with Juan Bautista he realizes that he actually was serving USA against the interest of his own country and people. He wonders:

I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war. Of course I was struggling! Of course I felt torn!

(Hamid, 2008, p. 173)

There is a struggle, of affiliations and identity, going on inside Changez. USA which proved to be a land of success for him is turning out to be an enemy because of its global capitalist and political policies. The host has become hostile. He is feeling deceived and exploited. Being an employee of Underwood Samson, he feels that he is serving the motives of imperialism and corporate capitalism against his own people and country. King (2007) explains reasons of Changez's disillusionment with USA that, 'The specifics of his distaste were widespread, but he is primarily angry with the American power, self-assurance, unilateralism and a concern for its own national security at the expense of others' (King, 2007, p. 684). It is important to note that up till this point in the story Changez has not shown any signs of religious extremism or the prospect of becoming a possible terrorist. On the contrary he drinks, is involved in a physical relationship with Erica and has never been concerned about performing any religious rituals. His narrative of success is falling apart as he is struggling to find an alternate narrative to which he can hold on to. In one such moment of conflict Changez finally quits his job and goes back to Pakistan to join his countrymen in its

moment of crisis. Travelling back to New York while reflecting on his experience of life in USA he concludes:

I had always resented the manner in which USA conducted itself in the world; your country's constant interference in the affairs of others was insufferable. Vietnam, Korea, the stairs of Taiwan, the Middle East, and now Afghanistan: in each of the major conflicts and standoffs that ringed my mother continent of Asia, USA played a central role. Moreover I knew from my experience as a Pakistani – of alternating periods of American aid and sanctions – that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power. It was right for me to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination; the only surprise was that I had required so much time to arrive at my decision.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 177)

By employing his ability to focus on the fundamentals and all his analytical skills achieved and harnessed at Underwood Samson, Changez concludes that the US Empire uses its strong economy and finances to exploit and manoeuvre other countries' political stability with the sole purpose of maintaining its hegemony over the rest of the world. Morey (2013) also recognizes this idea in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when he comments:

However, if we take into account the *journey* by which Changez arrives at his disenchanted and partisan position, we have an interesting snapshot of the bifurcation of the world after 9/11 and an awareness that old colonial instincts are still alive and well in the nations of the West – even if they sometimes cloak themselves nowadays in the rhetoric of globalization or liberal interventionism.

(Morey, 2013, p. 145)

Changez's words to his US listener that, 'the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums' sums up his views on the US ways of dealing with the rest of the world (Hamid, 2008, p. 190). He is unwilling to be a part of such a

ruthless project. He further goes on to say that, 'Such an America had to be stopped in the interest not only of the rest of humanity but also your own' (Hamid, 2008, p. 190). But the moment he returns to New York he realizes the enormity of what he was giving up. Even though he makes a feeble attempt to retain his job, it is too late by then and he is already fired from Underwood Samson. The word 'reluctant' in the title of the novel also signifies the hesitation of Changez with which he has to leave USA. Even at the most crucial of moment in his conflict he has made efforts to be accepted by USA. But at every occasion, be it Erica or the Underwood Samson, USA is not willing to accept him.

On his return from USA, Changez gets a job of a university lecturer and starts to preach anti-US agenda to his students. Changez's return to Pakistan highlights his dissatisfaction with US being a land of opportunities for the immigrants. In the post-9/11 world, and during a time when any affiliation with Islam or Pakistan was enough to invoke suspicions in the eyes of CIA and other US law enforcing agencies, Changez does not find USA a prospect for a successful life. Instead, he chooses to return to Pakistan where he can locate his roots, both national and religious. Along with many other binaries, Hamid reverses the status of USA and Pakistan as a land of opportunities. By doing so he re-invokes a sense of proud national identity. Even though the idea of nation and nationalism has been challenged vigorously by the notions of globalism and global modernity, the nation emerges as a strong and reinforced geo-political entity particularly in the post-9/11 US responses to terrorism. Jameson (1986) in *Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism*

argues that, ‘all third-world texts are necessarily...allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as...national allegories’ (Jameson, 1986, p. 69). Singh (2012) in *Insurgent Metaphors: Decentering 9/11 in Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Kamila Shamsie’s Burnt Shadows* also goes on to endorse Jameson’s (1986) idea of third world’s texts’ being national allegories when she claims:

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is both a meditation on the figure of the disenchanting immigrant and an investigation into the flimsy terms of postcolonial nationalist fervor. Pakistan, once the graveyard of a frustrated elite, prompts the flight of the immigrant to the land of opportunities, yet it is transformed upon Changez’s return into the sight of a rejuvenated national and cultural identity. The United States, where Changez had once sought advancement and prosperity, becomes the perpetrator of racism and injustice.

(Singh, 2012, p. 7)

Some of Changez’s interviews on the international media become very popular where he is very vocal about the US injustices done to Afghanistan and the Muslim world. During one such interview he speaks of unjustified US military actions to other lands: ‘[...] no country inflicts death so readily upon the inhabitants of other countries, frightens so many people so far away, as America’ (Hamid, 2008, p. 207). Such harsh views have brought him to the attention of many, including the US agencies. While Changez accompanies his US listener back to his hotel, he offers him a mirror in which to see himself distinguishing the victim and the predator:

You should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins.

(Hamid, 2008, p. 209)

Hamid challenges assumptions and interpretive strategies which are based upon stereotypical identities of the other nations. As the true identities of Changez and the unnamed US interlocutor still remain unknown, the readers are left to make up their own minds. The novel ends in ambiguity and uncertainty as the waiter from the Anarkali Market approaches the two and the US interlocutor puts his hand in his jacket. We never know what he intended to draw from under his jacket or whether Changez was a fundamentalist and an associate of the waiter who was planning to kidnap or murder the US listener. This uncertainty leads to an unfinished and unresolved ending leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Based on the above detailed discussion of various themes and tropes of the novel, I believe that Hamid succeeded in depicting the complexity within the significant issues that the twenty first century nations are grappling with. The totalizing categories of 'East' and 'West' or 'them' and 'us' had a discourse of war inherently rooted in them. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008), as a paracolonial text, asks its readers to think beyond these categories and hence becomes 'an example of a sort of deterritorialization of literature' (Morey, 2001, p. 138). By analyzing the title, form and the name symbolism in the novel, Morey (2011) argues that Hamid succeeds in creating a narrative that is sly, cunning and deceitful in nature and fulfils the need for a new form of interrogative writing that challenges hegemonic discourses and established categories. Through Changez's character, whose identity is provisional and shifting throughout the novel, the narrative avoids opposing binary cultural terms. Morey (2011) concludes that the aftermath of 9/11 is

still claiming victims all around the world most of which go unnoticed therefore the main function of texts like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is, 'to record such experiences and keep the eyes of the hyper-conscious Western world on the possible estranging effects of its violent and self-aggrandizing policies' (Morey, 2001, p. 145).

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* presents a struggle between the two most powerful discourses of our time: Capitalism and Islamic fundamentalism. Both the discourses make use of similar strategies for gaining hegemony and supremacy over the other. In today's postmodern world where the concept of truth has become relative; it becomes very difficult to believe either of the two. Hamid consciously employs ambiguity as a narrative strategy and he himself avoids taking sides with either of the two discourses. Instead of an illiterate, poor and regressive radical, Hamid chooses to depict his fundamentalist as a secular, Westernized, and a US-educated Pakistani young man. Changez is not a blind follower of the religious narrative but possesses a reasoning mind with the ability to analyze the popular rhetoric and the ability to focus on the fundamentals. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* resists stereotyping Pakistan and Pakistanis as terrorists. Hamid's paracolonial fiction demands we open a dialogue between the West and the Islamic world to have a better idea of the threats that terrorism poses to the whole world. Through Changez, Hamid has deconstructed the US attitude towards War on Terror and the Muslims. Hamid further urges his readers to revise their perceptions and think of the Pakistani Muslims from a different perspective.

Hamid's craftsmanship lies in the blending of multiple issues and using them for developing a masterfully woven plot. The descriptions of Changez's meeting with his US interlocutor in the tea cafe of Anarkali bazaar Lahore, details of his job and life in USA and his love affair with Erica, complement and contribute to the main plot: Changez's probable transformation into a religious fundamentalist from a liberal and progressive young man. Furthermore, by using second person pronoun and dramatic monologue,<sup>36</sup> instead of a traditional dialogue form in his novel, Hamid invites his readers to make their own judgements about Changez and his probable conversion to an extremist. Reacting to the re-emergence and reaffirmation of the Islam verses the West binary in a post-9/11 world, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* challenges the media and discursive representation of the West as victim of trauma and asks the readers to look at and deconstruct the issue from an alternate perspective. The reader is required to take on an authorial position in order to give meaning to the narrative. Sarah Ilott (2014) argues that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*:

[...] creates a new kind of authorship, as the reader is placed to evaluate the evidence and thereby construct a fitting ending to the tale. Rather than passively imbibing yet another story/ news item about the impending and unavoidable threat of terror, the outcome of the story is, in this case, down to the reader as the shaper of meaning. In doing such shaping, readers are removed from a state of passive victimhood and can have access to the cathartic and

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<sup>36</sup>Hamid, about his love for second person and dramatic monologue, writes that he wanted to:

try to show, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, how feelings already present inside a reader – fear, anger, suspicion, loyalty – could colour a narrative so that the reader, as much as or even more than the writer, is deciding what is really going on.

(Hamid, 2013)



restorative functions associated with authorship and narrative control.

(Ilott, 2014, p. 574)

Hamid places a special emphasis on his readers' active involvement in the construction of meaning while reading his novels. Both his novels, *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, demand the readers to be attentive to various developments in the plot and the story but the use of dramatic monologue in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* makes the readers' role even more important. They are called upon, not only to participate in meaning construction but are also being, 'implicitly called upon to make a decision as to the most appropriate generic framework under which to interpret the novella: is it a confession, a thriller, cross-cultural (or international) romance, or a national allegory?' (Ilott, 2014, p. 578). Furthermore, *Moth Smoke*, with the details of the crimes committed, makes it easier for the readers to have their own interpretations whereas in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* there is not actual crime committed, either by Changez or his US interlocutor. Hence readers are left with more uncertainty and ambiguity, as compared to Hamid's former novel, while making any judgment as they are not only required to judge various characters from within the text but also the legitimacy and authenticity of the Western media and print discourse is also being questioned throughout *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Hamid acts as a mediator between Pakistan and the Western world, argues Claudia Perner (2011). In *Tracing the Fundamentalist in Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke and The Reluctant Fundamentalist* she explores the factors which cause seemingly harmless and well educated characters' turn into probable fundamentalists.

She argues that *Moth Smoke* (2001) presents, ‘the despairing image of a protagonist, a city, and a country at a moment of crisis, a moment when individuals are adrift and frustration is likely to feed into the politics of anger’ (Perner, 2011, p. 29) whereas *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, ‘is a novel that offers insight into the motivations and sentiments of a person who in the West might all too easily be dismissed as a fundamentalist’ (Perner, 2011, p. 29). Perner believes that Hamid’s characters are not religious fundamentalists rather their aggression is a reaction against the socio-economic deterioration and a failed foreign policy of Pakistan. Hamid further acts as a political intervener to the dominating and hegemonic post-9/11 Western discourse about Pakistan and the Pakistanis through *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008). His narrative is particularly focused on and directed to the Western readership or as Morey puts it that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, ‘writes back to both imperial and neo-imperial centres’ (Morey, 2011, p. 142). Hamid challenges their discursively constructed cultural and political preconceptions about other nations on the peripheries and highlights their understanding of the world as flawed.

Hamid, by presenting the world with narratives coming from the peripheries, urges his readers to listen to these voices coming from the margins and revisit their preconceived notions of *other* lands and people. Moreover the analysis shows that the themes that Hamid explores through his novels place him into a category of those writers who are more concerned about a paracolonial condition in the world. He is not much interested in situating the problems of his country as an aftermath of the British colonial rule in the subcontinent. Instead, he consciously distances his tales

from it and tries to deconstruct the socio-political chaos that Pakistan is going through, both on indigenous and international level, by situating this chaos in the post-independence failure of the military and political ruling elite of Pakistan.

## Chapter 6: Mohammed Hanif: An Author of Satire

Hanif's fiction is a satirical deconstruction of power structures in the Pakistani society. Contextualized in the corridors of power, history and socio-ethnic fragmentation of Pakistan, he uses satire to construct his narratives and eventually to contrast the voice of the marginalized against the hegemonic and stereotypical discursive practices of Pakistan. Northrop Frye (1957) in *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* argues that satire's goal is:

[...] breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crack theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement of society.

(Frye, 1957, p. 233)

Hanif situates many micro-narratives, in his text, to challenge the pre-established beliefs, ambiguities and theories regarding some of the real life historical and social realities of Pakistan. Rosenheim (1983) asserts that in a satirical text, it is very important to pick referents from the real life. He argues:

The dupes or victims of punitive satire are not mere fictions. They, or the objects which they represent, must be, or have been, plainly existent in the world of reality; they must, that is, possess genuine historic identity. The reader must be capable of pointing to the world of reality, past or present, and identifying the individual or group, institution, custom, belief, or idea which is under attack by the satirist.

(Rosenheim, 1983, p. 318)

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) is an appropriate example of Rosenheim's (1983) argument for it uses General Zia-ul-Haq as its main victim or target of satire. General Zia-ul-Haq's personality, though controversial, is well known to all the Pakistani readers as his policies for the religious metamorphosis of the Pakistani society has left a great impact on the country's social, political and even judicial system. Furthermore, the Pakistani readers are easily able to identify and relate with the various other characters and episodes in the narrative and hence understand Hanif's intentions to satirize General Zia Zia-ul-Haq and his policies.

This chapter focuses on the analysis of two of his novels; *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011). Both these novels explore various facets of the Pakistani society and politics. His first novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) focuses on the power structures and various political conspiracies hatched and carried out in Pakistan by the military and intelligence agencies during the martial law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), his second novel, is a social requiem that explores the status of women and religious minorities as suppressed and marginalized communities in the patriarchal Pakistani society. Narrated by a Christian female nurse, who belongs to lower class, the narrative unearths various forms of social, religious and physical abuses that relegate these suppressed communities as outcasts and rejected factions of the society.

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes* was published in 2008 and narrates the events that led to the death of General Zia-ul-Haq, the then president of Pakistan, in a plane

crash in 1988. The novel is a political satire of the military regime in Pakistan, explores various conspiracies in the Pakistani politics and military of 1980s and mocks a hypocritical self-centred piety of General Zia-ul-Haq. Even though the plot of the novel is mainly about the events leading to the death of General Zia, Hanif also incorporates the details about Pakistan in the 1980s; bearing the aftermath of a long Afghan war, the US influence in Pakistani politics, financially and morally corrupt Pakistani military junta, poor living conditions of the low working class and their desire for a change in the country. The narration of the novel keeps oscillating between the political and the personal-satirical.

Hanif's choice of a fictional reconstruction of an event from the past is very much rooted in Postmodernism's parodic treatment of history. Postmodern theory asserts that any form of social, political and cultural history is a discursive construct and the only way to know the truth about past is first by acknowledging it as a construct and then by incorporating it in a narrative to make its various versions contest against each other. Postmodern fiction aims to deconstruct the social and political contexts of history and challenge its status and acceptability as the only true record of past events. Hutcheon (1988) argues that, 'Parody is a perfect Postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies' (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 11). I argue through this research that the paracolonial Pakistani fiction writers re-appropriate history to their own benefits and by representing various fictional accounts of the past make them compete against each other. This re-appropriation of history further makes the readers to strive for

meaning. Hanif chooses one of the most ambiguous historical episodes of Pakistan as the main plot of his narrative in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008). He not only incorporates it but incorporates many of its possible versions into the narrative. Through the contest between the stories he invites his readers to revisit the Pakistani history and think of it in terms of a constructed and doubtful version of the past. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) also conforms to Crimp's (1983) theorizing of the postmodern historical fiction. He argues that in postmodern fiction the 'Notions of originality, authenticity and presence...are undermined' (Douglas, 1983, p. 53). Hutcheon also revisits Gossman's review of history in modern fiction and twists it to describe her own idea. She argues that both postmodern history and fiction have:

[...] rejected the ideal of representation that dominated them for so long. Both now conceive of their work as exploration, testing, creation of new meanings, rather than as a disclosure or revelation of meanings already in some sense "there" but not immediately perceptible.

(Hutcheon, 1983, pp. 15-16)

Hanif challenges the relationship of history and reality and consciously incorporates multiple motives which all contribute in their own way towards an expected and desired conclusion of the narrative; death of General Zia Zia-ul-Haq in a plane crash. His narration of these multiple storylines is also ambiguous and unreliable as he does not give authenticity to any particular storyline.

*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), on the other hand, is rooted in the contemporary Pakistan and explores the gender, socio-economic and religious divide in various factions of the society. Hanif chooses a Christian woman as the protagonist of his narrative and through her journey of suffering and resilience gives

a critique of the social and religious structures of Pakistan. Women have suffered from acute identity crisis in most postcolonial societies and are still struggling to find a respectable space with equal rights. In Pakistan, along with patriarchal social structures, religion and class divide have also contributed in relegating women to the margins of society and have deprived them of their due rights. Postcolonial theory tends to challenge any form of hegemonic discourse and the resultant binary of margin versus centre. Feminism, in collaboration with postcolonialism, has concerned itself, 'with the study and defence of marginalized 'Others' within repressive structures of domination' (Gandhi, 1999, pp. 82-83). Both these paradigms look to foreground the voice of those communities which exist on the margins and have been silenced by the more powerful and dominating discourses. With a focus on the struggle of the oppressed classes both, feminism and postcolonialism resist the pre-established hierarchical and patriarchal structures and reject masculine authority as a symbol of absolute power. Gandhi further goes on to argue:

Feminist and postcolonial theory alike began with an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender/culture/race, and they have each progressively welcomed the poststructuralist invitation to refuse the binary oppositions upon which patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself.

(Gandhi, 1999, p. 83)

By employing the tools of poststructuralism and postcolonialism, feminism tends to challenge any form of dominating discourse, be it religious, social or economic, which had played its part in marginalizing women. Gayatri Spivak has also used this trio of theoretical paradigms in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) to



highlight the plight of the deprived and marginalized factions like peasants, workers and women. She argues that it is not possible to retrieve the true voice of the subaltern. Instead she stresses that the, ‘intellectual project must try to make visible the position of the marginalized. The subaltern must be spoken for...but not romanticized’ (Spivak, 1988, p. 25). Spivak claims that a colonized woman is thrice colonized as she had to cope with the suppressing colonial, patriarchal and class structures (Morris, 2010). Burdened with so many factors and discourses, the Pakistani woman is also denied of any progressive role in the social evolution of the country. Hanif’s *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) is a record of various hegemonic and manipulative discourses which tend to curb women and religious minorities in Pakistan.

Women’s suppression and subjugation has emerged as an important and main theme of this research as almost all the authors included in this research have highlighted the demeaning treatment of women in the Pakistani society. Suleri and Shamsie have been very outspoken about this dilemma whereas in Hamid’s fiction it emerges as a subplot. Hanif uses his narrative to highlight various factors which are contributing in the subjugation of women in the Pakistani society. The paracolonial Pakistani writers insist on understanding and accepting difference and otherness as a means to offer new space for marginalized and suppressed communities. In my analysis of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), I explore to what an extent Hanif succeeds in presenting the struggle of a Pakistani Christian woman and how does the society respond to her quest for identity and respect. Moreover, the chapter further

explores how he uses his fiction to deconstruct the political and social structures of his country.

### **6.1: A Case of Exploding Mangoes: A Case of Exploding History**

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) is a fictional reconstruction of the events and circumstances that led to the crash of Pak One, the plane that was carrying president of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq, US ambassador to Pakistan, Arnold Raphel and many other high profile Pakistani military generals. Hanif puts many conspiracy theories surrounding the crash of Pak One to test through his narrative. He incorporates fictional characters and mixes storylines with the real events and people from the country's political history and explores the mechanics of power politics in Pakistan of 1980s. By doing so he manages to situate the micro-narratives of common people parallel to a larger historical event and deconstructs the two from each other's perspectives. Ali Shigri, Hanif's protagonist and mouthpiece in the narrative, reads the scribbling on the walls of a dungeon in Lahore Fort and wonders that his predecessors 'had a lot to say, both *personal and political*' (Hanif, 2008, p. 108). The narrative further explores various aspects of General Zia-ul-Haq's life and personality in detail and tries to determine various factors which influenced some of his very important political decisions as the president of Pakistan. His efforts to Islamize the Pakistani society, his relationship with the Saudi and the US leadership and involvement in the Afghan resistance against the Russian invasion have resulted in a religiously radicalized, ethnically divided, fragmented and a

patriarchal Pakistani society. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) tries to contextualize General Zia-ul-Haq's rule in the geo-political situation of South Asia with many international forces working on their hidden agendas and interests.

In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) there is no logical connection among various parts of the narrative. It is rather a stumbling narrative moving from point to point; from General Zia's observation of the army parade to the appreciation of a paratrooper's jump from C-130, to the reception of the news of Indira's murder to seizing the opportunity of attending her funeral in India. Each turn finds its place in the plot not for unavoidable logic but to grab an occasion to dig deeper in order to expose the imposter, General Zia-ul-Haq. It does not have a smooth plot with a sustained push forward because how, why and what happened is less important as Pakistan's immediate history is too well known to inspire any curiosity in the reader. The real significance lies in the twists that Hanif lends to the situations to make them comically crisp.

The novel opens with a prologue in which Ali Shigri, the narrator and the protagonist of the novel, informs the readers about the crash of Pak One. The prologue, with a reference to various possible conspiracy theories which surround the reasons of the crash till date, informs the reader that these will not only be explored but will also be used as a tool to construct this narrative. The presence of many contesting possibilities further hints towards a narrative of mystery and uncertainty. While walking towards the plane Zia seems troubled by something as he, 'is walking the walk of a constipated man' (Hanif, 2008, p. 1). General Akhtar

also moves reluctantly towards the plane and it seems as if, ‘he is the only man in the group who knows that they shouldn’t be boarding the plane’ (Hanif, 2008, p. 2). It is obvious that something wrong and ill-fated is in store for the passengers of Pak One as ‘anybody can tell that they were being shepherded to that plane by the invisible hand of death’ (Hanif, 2008, p. 2). Contrary to the reluctant boarders, only one character Ali Shigri can be seen smiling in the background. Tense expressions of the ill-fated and about-to-die boarders of Pakistan One and Ali Shigri’s contrasting smile establish the element of doubt and mystery right from the outset of the story and make him a suspect of the crash. The prologue ends when Ali Shigri takes the readers two months and seventeen days back into the past to unravel the facts about various events that caused a smile on his face, on the day of the crash. It is significant to note that right from the beginning Hanif’s portrayal of Zia’s character is very sarcastic. Anything that he does or thinks about is presented in a demeaning and a satiric manner. Commenting on General Zia-ul-Haq’s death Hanif once said in a television interview that it was not the Pakistani nation that buried Zia rather it was Zia who buried the whole nation through his wrong policies. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) is rooted in Hanif’s criticism of General Zia-ul-Haq’s hypocritical political policies and as the narrative progresses; tales of various characters start to converge to expose the man as a wily and manipulative person.

Ali Shigri is about to graduate from the Pakistan Military Academy in four weeks’ time, he has been recommended for the Sword of Honour and has also won the Best Short Range Shooting Shigri Memorial Trophy which is named after the

legendary late Colonel Shigri. Colonel Shigri, who was Ali Shigri's father, worked as a liaison between the Afghan mujahedeen and ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) and was mainly responsible for the transfer of finances from ISI to the mujahedeen. One day he was found dead, hanging by a rope, in his own house. Ali Shigri holds Zia responsible for the incident and wants to avenge his father's death by killing him.

The prologue is followed by a statement by the Junior Under Officer Ali Shigri about the unauthorized absence of his roommate, cadet Obiad. He is being questioned and investigated for any information about Obaid's whereabouts and reasons for his disappearance. In his statement he discloses no reason for Obaid's disappearance and it remains a mystery for the time being. Even though it appears that he knows something about the matter, he does not reveal anything to the authorities. Finally he is threatened with being handed over to the ISI, the much feared intelligence agency of Pakistan. Shigri wonders, 'They cannot call in the Inter bloody Services bloody Intelligence just because a cadet has gone AWOL' (Hanif, 2008, p. 22).

Hanif's choice of his narrators is also significant. Half of the novel is narrated by Ali Shigri in the first person who provides a more subjective and personalized account of the tale. The rest of the novel is narrated through third person and provides all the details about Zia and other characters. Even though every second chapter is interpolated with first person pronoun narration by Ali Shigri, both narrators contribute to unfolding of the main plot and the narrative moves forward with separate details of Zia and Ali Shigri's life.

Hanif introduces Zia's character in chapter two, offering his morning prayers and consulting the Holy Quran as his daily horoscope. The verse that he tumbles upon, narrates the story of the prophet Jonah who remained in the belly of a whale as a punishment for a long period of time after he walked out on his people. The verse 21:37 reads:

*And remember Zun-nus, when he departed in wrath: he imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, 'There is no god but thou! Glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!'*

(Hanif, 2008, p. 23)

The verse serves to be the central trope of the novel and appears many times in the pages to follow. Zia, known as a *mullah* (cleric) by the other military generals, used to consult the Quran as a horoscope guide on daily basis. Even against the advice of established religious Muslim scholars like Maududi the temptation to use the holy book for such a purpose, was too great to be resisted. Hanif says that this obsession of General Zia becomes the reason for some of the bleak but defining moments in the political history of Pakistan when he justified his otherwise unlawful and immoral acts as direct orders to him by Allah through the Holy book. He topples the democratic government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and becomes the head of the state when one morning he finds the verse, '*He is who hath made you regents in the earth*' (Hanif, 2008, p. 23) and then two years later hangs Bhutto when he comes across another verse, '*And the guilty behold the fire and know that they are about to fall therein, and they find no way of escape thence*' (Hanif, 2008, p. 23). Zia is confused by the verse he finds today as his horoscope as it hints towards Allah's wrath and

displeasure. He plans to consult with the mosque imam during the morning prayers and to seek his guidance in this matter.

Hanif is very explicit in his satirical portrayal of the military personnel of Pakistan Army, most of which is targeted at General Zia-ul-Haq and portrays him as a man full of contradictions. Contrary to Zia's public image of a very religious and god-fearing man, Hanif reveals the hidden part of his character by probing into his mind; normally obsessed with sex, fear and contradictions. Hanif's ability to create humour out of simple events is at its best when Zia is about to leave for his morning prayers in the mosque and peeps into his wife's bedroom:

He opened the door gently and took a peep. The table lamp was on and his wife was sleeping with her ample back towards him. Every time he saw her like this he remembered what Prince Naif had told him about why Bedouins had such huge organs. According to the Prince they had evolved in response to the huge derrieres of their women. Evolution happens very fast in the desert, General Zia had joked.

(Hanif, 2008, p. 27)

While going for his morning prayers, he is thinking of his discussion with Prince Naif about the sexual organs of Bedouins. In his public appearances and speeches he has always posed as a very pious and a religious person but his private moments and thoughts, in the novel, show an opposite side of his personality. Hanif belittles Zia's stature by tearing his claims, of loyalty with the country and religion, apart through his satire and dark comedy. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) depicts Zia's public and private persona divided between Islam and sex. He uses Islam to manipulate the masses' support, strengthen his authority and control over army generals and to justify his decision to become an ally of USA in order to support the



Afghan mujahedeen in their resistance against the Russian army. Whereas his otherwise hidden obsession with sex surfaces, in the narrative, whenever he meets some female US journalist. Hanif foregrounds such contradictions in General Zia's personality to represent him as a man who is superstitious, unbalanced and devoid of any rational thinking.

In his first meeting with the military leadership of the country, after toppling Bhutto's democratic government and appointing himself as the head of the state, Zia is nervous and afraid of the reaction of his subordinate generals and takes refuge in Islam to establish his authority. He snubs his generals for using the word 'god' instead of 'Allah' in the translation of verses from the Holy book. The generals knew that Zia's obsession with religion would influence the people and the country at large but the way Hanif describes the impact his policies had on the masses is remarkable:

[...] all God's names were slowly deleted from the national memory as if a wind had swept the land and blown them away. Innocuous, intimate names: Persian *Khuda* which had always been handy for ghazal poets as it rhymed with most of the operative verbs; *Rab*, which poor people invoked in their hours of distress; *Maula*, which Sufis shouted in their hashish sessions. Allah had given himself ninety-nine names. His people had improvised many more. But all these names slowly started to disappear: from official stationary, from Friday sermons, from newspaper editorials, from mothers' prayers, from greeting cards, from official memos...from cricket players' curses; even from beggars' begging pleas. In the name of God, God was exiled from the land and replaced by the one and only Allah who, General Zia had convinced himself, spoke only through him.

(Hanif, 2008, p. 34)

Zia's religious rigidity had such a huge influence on the lives of the people of the whole country that they were even exploited linguistically and deprived of the right to address God as they wished to. Along with Hanif, Suleri and Shamsie are also

very critical of General Zia-ul-Haq's use of Islam as a discourse of power and manipulation for his political motives. Suleri condemned his strategy of Islamizing the judicial, institutional and academic structures as she knew that religion would become a tool of suppression in the Pakistani society and, 'God could now leave the home and soon would join the government' (Suleri, 1989, p. 15). Shamsie also chronicles the impact that Islamization had on the Pakistani society in *Burnt Shadows* (2009). Sajjad's frustration with Islam being imposed on the masses by the Pakistani government is acute when:

On his way out he cursed under his breath the government which kept trying to force religion into everything public. His mother, with her most intimate relationship with Allah, would have personally knocked on the door of Army House and told the President he should have more shame than to ask all citizens to conduct their love affairs with the Almighty out in the open.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 147)

The fiction being produced in Pakistan, in the wake of Islamic terrorism and religious extremism within and outside the national borders, explores General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime and many of these writers hold him and his power tactics responsible for the religious radicalization of the Pakistani society. Suleri and Shamsie's descriptions are based upon the socio-political representations of the 1980s whereas Hanif delves deep into the events by putting General Zia-ul-Haq as a character in his novel and uses his narrative for a sarcastic, satirist and clownish depiction of the man as an imposter and a manipulator.

Frye argues that satire targets, 'an object of attack' (Frye, 1957, p. 224). By opting to depict General Zia, through his narrative, and satirize his personality and

various decisions, Hanif furnishes his readers with a personality from their national history with whom they could relate. It enables the informed readers to understand the satire with which Hanif targets General Zia-ul-Haq. Knight (1992), while highlighting some of the key features of a satiric text, also asserts the need for referentiality in a satirical text as:

The identity of the satiric referent, its independence, and the transformation that occurs when satire may be said to textualize it are major elements of the satiric message.

(Knight, 1992, p. 35)

Postcolonial texts make use of satire to point out the gap between the ideal and the real with satire acting as mediator between the two. Through this mediation of satire, these texts tend to challenge the hegemonic and corrupt power structures established not only during the times of colonial occupation but also in the postcolonial era. Ball (2003) argues:

Like the postcolonial text, the paradigmatic satiric text is also obsessed with non-accommodating power dynamics and more interested in differences than similarities.

(Ball, 2003, p. 4)

He further goes on to highlight the function of a postcolonial satirist text:

Satire, with its deliberate misrepresentations and detached, objectifying gaze, is the quintessential form of othering. It is not usually in the interest of satiric rhetoric to play fair by articulating the causes and conditions that might contextualize a particular (mis)representation; explaining too much weakens the satire's bite.

(Ball, 2003, p. 13)

General Zia-ul-Haq became a 'shared matrix of reference' (Slemon, 1988, p. 165) for the Pakistani people to understand the military regime and its ironies. On the

other hand, for the international readers, Hanif's text provides an opportunity to understand the factors that contributed in making Pakistani society what it is today.

Another satirical episode that degrades Zia's abilities as the head of the state is Dr. Sarwary's inspection of General Zia's private parts. Even though the episode appears to be an innocuous affair in the life of the Zia yet it reveals the dictator's approach towards handling the affairs of his country. Dr. Sarwary, who is the private sexual health doctor of Saudi prince Naif, has been personally requested by Zia for his check up. Zia is in a bending position with his head on the table, his trousers slipped down and Dr. Sarwary's hand is on his buttock. At that very moment Zia's eyes are fixed on the national and army's flags on the table:

He looked at the army flag. Underneath the crossed swords was the famous slogan that the Founder of the nation had given this country as its birthday present and motto: 'Faith, Unity, Discipline.' Suddenly the slogan seemed not only banal and meaningless to him but too secular, non-committal, almost heretical. Faith, which faith? Unity? Discipline? Do soldiers need that slogan? [...] It also dawned on him that when the Founder came up with this slogan, he had civilians in mind, not the armed forces. This slogan, he told himself, had to go. His mind raced, searching for words that would reflect the true nature of his soldiers' mission. Allah had to be there. Jihad, very important. He knew it would please his friend Bill Casey. He couldn't decide on a third word but he knew it would come.

(Hanif, 2008, pp. 82-83)

Zia thinks of possible changes in the national and army flags of Pakistan at a moment which is completely bizarre for the job. Hanif's mastery at putting so much in one small paragraph here is extraordinary. The parallel descriptions of half-naked Zia being checked up by Dr. Sarwary, his thoughts regarding the national and the army flags and his questioning the slogan that the founder of the country gave, show

Hanif's ability to create humour out of apparently irrelevant issues. Moreover, Zia is more concerned to please Bill Casey, the director of CIA, than his own countrymen.

Such contradictions in the personality of Zia are further elaborated in the newspaper coverage of his interview by a female foreign correspondent Joanne Herring. The picture of Zia with Joanne Herring that appeared in *Pakistan Times* next day was shocking for the First Lady, Zia's wife, as she found General Zia staring at the journalist's breasts:

The woman in the picture was wearing a blouse cut so low that half her breasts were out, pushed up and pressed together so closely that the diamond on her necklace was resting on the cusp of her cleavage. And then, there was her husband, the Man of Truth, the Man of Faith, the man who lectured women on piety on prime-time TV, the man who had fired judges and television newscasters who refused to wear a dupatta on their heads, the man who made sure that two pillows could not be shown together on an empty bed in a television drama, the man who made cinema owners blot out any bare legs or arms of actresses from the film posters; the same man was sitting there staring at these globes of white flesh with such single-mindedness that it seems as if his own wife had been born without a pair.

(Hanif, 2008, p. 93)

Zia's campaign for Islamization of Pakistan was so severe that it affected almost every aspect of life in Pakistan; be it social, political or even cultural. Zia's stare in this paragraph mocks at his pseudo-religiosity which he propagated so vigorously throughout his life to deceive his people. Hanif's humorous tone in this paragraph is more of a protest against a Zia's policies that affected the lives of the people of Pakistan. Similar to this episode at another occasion, when Zia visited Texas for raising funds for Jihad and Joanne comes to see him in his office, the description of his feelings and actions, while greeting her, are quite revealing.

The door opened and a swirl of sandalwood perfume, peach coloured silk and mauve lipstick came at him...General Zia stood up, still not sure whether he should leave the desk, still uncertain whether to kiss or hug or extend his hand from behind the safety of the desk. Then as Joanne lunged towards him, the self control that had helped him survive three wars, one coup and two elections vanished. He left the table that was to be his defence against temptation and moved towards her with extended arms, unable to focus on her face or her features. In her embrace he noted with satisfaction that she wasn't wearing her high heels, which made her a head taller than he was. They were the same height without her heels. Her left breast pressed lightly against the strain of his safari suit and General Zia closed his eyes, his chin resting on the satin bra strap on her shoulder.

(Hanif, 2008, pp. 97-98)

Hanif reduces Zia's stature and his feelings to the level of any common man who is too engrossed in sexual thoughts and his self-claimed piety is reduced to nothing but lechery.

The narrative moves forward as Zia, afraid of the Quranic horoscope, restricts him to the army house, cancels all his public arrangements and is concerned about his security. Obaid knew about Ali Shigri's plan to kill Zia with his sword during an inspection of silent drill. In order to cause a distraction and save Ali's life he tries to disappear in a plane using Ali Shigri's call sign but is captured. Ali is arrested, tortured and imprisoned in the Lahore Fort by Major Kiyani, an ISI official and is interrogated there about Obaid's disappearance.

The presence of the high ranked US officials and their influence on the Pakistani politics and military is another important aspect of the novel. Many US officials like Arnold Raphel, the US ambassador to Pakistan, Bill Casey, the Director of the CIA and Bannon, the drill instructor at the PAF academy appear recurrently

throughout the narrative. They enjoy very cordial relationship with the Pakistani military leadership which benefits USA's geo-political interests in South Asia. Zia is hopeful of winning Nobel Prize for bringing peace in Afghanistan, with US support on his side. USA is providing all the funding for the Afghan resistance against the Russians whereas the Pakistan army is providing full support by distributing the US money among the Afghan mujahedeen and training them in the art of war. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) explores this nexus between USA and Pakistan, their policies in Afghanistan and its repercussions for the Pakistanis and the rest of the world. USA understood the importance of General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime, his policies of Islamization and the significance of the logistic support provided by the Pakistan army to strengthen their role in Afghanistan. One example of this nexus in the novel is a party in Islamabad thrown by Arnold Raphel on 4<sup>th</sup> July for the US and Pakistani dignitaries. The dress code for the party is a Kabul-Texas theme where the male US diplomats can be seen dressed as Afghan warriors whereas US women in *burqas* (Islamic form of veil for women) and other Afghan traditional clothes. The University of Nebraska's professor thinks of the Pakistan army's role very important in keeping USA safe as he remarks that, 'They are keeping the enemy at bay. They are guiding us while we enjoy this feast, this feast to celebrate our freedom. We must share our bounty with them' (Hanif, 2008, p. 210). Multi-directionality of this paracolonial satiric text takes the role of the neo-colonial hegemonic powers like USA, UN and World Bank into consideration and questions their manipulative political and financial strategies. The presence of the US Ambassador and other high

ranked civil and military officials, along with OBL (Osama bin Laden) indicates the continuation of the imperialist policies through the control and influence of the stronger countries on the Third World nations.

It was the nexus between USA, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia that supported and encouraged the rise of Islamic extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan during the 1980s which resulted in a back lash in the twenty first century in the form of 9/11, 7/7 and other terrorist activities throughout the world. USA was willing to help Pakistan army financially until they play their role effectively and efficiently in guarding their interests. OBL, acronym for Osama Bin Laden, another guest at the party is a, 'lanky man with a flowing beard' (Hanif, 2008, p. 210) who is greeted well by Chuck Coogan, the CIA chief. Chuck appreciates OBL's role and acknowledges his efforts when he says that, 'we would have never won this war without our Saudi friends' (Hanif, 2008, p. 211). Along with Hanif, Hamid and Shamsie also explore the issue of terrorism and its rise in the world through their fiction and hold USA, and its geo-political policies in South Asia, responsible for its becoming a threat to the world peace. In Pakistan, it was General Zia-ul-Haq whose vested interests (a prolonged rule and Islamization of the society) benefited USA during the cold war against Russia. USA exploited the whole situation to its own benefit but at the cost of a social fragmentation of the Pakistani society. Rushdie writes of such exploitative neo-colonial policies of the West:

One should remember that the likes of General Zia rule by permission of the Western alliance [...] And it seems to me that readers in the West who read this book should think



about the idea that the freedoms which are so prized in the West are bought at the price of other peoples.

(Rushdie, 1985, p. 16)

The West continues to enjoy its hegemony and supremacy over the weaker nations through the implementation of neo-colonial imperialist policies. West's support to the military, control over multinational corporations and ability to manipulate the democratic process in the Third World countries, results into crumbling and destabilized socio-political structures in the once colonized nations. Muneeza Shamsie (2009), in *Covert Operations in Pakistani Fiction*, explores three novels by Pakistani writers: *The Reluctant Fundamentalists*, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *The Wasted Vigil* and tries to uncover the role of USA and Russia in the socio-political chaos that Pakistan is undergoing currently. She argues that this new generation of Pakistani writers, 'does not flinch from revealing unpleasant truths [...] and thus build bridges between diverse cultures, classes and nations, East and West' (Shamsie, 2009, p. 30) and explores issues like connivance of militancy and military in Pakistan's internal and external affairs.

Colonel Shigri's dissatisfaction and frustration over Pakistan's role during the Cold War between Russia and USA is obvious when he says:

The thing about these Afghans is that they are not it for the killing. They fight but they want to make sure that they are alive after the fighting is over. They are not in the business of killing. They are in the business of fighting. Americans are in it for winning. And us? [...] pimps and prostitutes.

(Hanif, 2008, p. 240)

The Afghans were fighting for their land and a peaceful future whereas USA used Pakistan to ensure their supremacy over the rest of the world. Hanif blames General

Zia-ul-Haq and his military establishment for becoming a player in the US war and bringing abuse to their society and country.

In contrast to Zia's suppressive policies, in the narrative, are the characters of his wife and Zainab. Zainab is a blind girl who is gang raped but jailed on account of adultery because she was unable to see and recognize those who raped her. In the Pakistani patriarchal society, General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization further strengthened the men and marginalized women by denying them any chances of equal rights and space. Zia's wife reprimands him on his staring at the breasts of the US journalist but there is nothing else she can do. Even though, along with her verbal protests, she tells General Zia that their marriage is over, she stays in the president house and acts as the first lady of the country. It is the social and cultural pressure which does not allow her to voice the agony she is going through and she is unable to expose the imposter before the nation. Zainab, on the other hand, does not even have the choice to convince the General or the judiciary of her innocence as it is impossible for her to recognize her rapists because of her blindness. Restricted and exploited by the patriarchal social structures she has no other option but to curse Zia and it is her curse that becomes one of the possible reasons for General Zia's death, later in the narrative. Hanif makes a mockery of the religious judicial system and Zia's belief in it when he consults with the ninety year old and retired Saudi Qadi (judge) regarding Zainab's inability to recognize her rapists. Qadi's advice is as ridiculous as it can be when he responds:

It can be done in two ways: if she is married, her husband will have to establish in the court that she is of good character and then we'll need four male Muslims of sound

character who have witnessed the crime. And since rape is a very serious crime, circumstantial evidence wouldn't do [...] witnesses will be required to have witnessed the actual penetration. And if the woman is not married she'll have to prove that she was a virgin before this horrible crime was committed.

(Hanif, 2008, p. 139)

All the possible choices which could prove Zainab innocent are insane and impossible to prove. A seasoned Saudi Qadi and a head of the military state both are unable to recognize the ridiculous nature of the whole case and the verdict given by the Pakistani religious courts is to stone Zainab to death. Instead of recognizing the loop holes in the judicial system, they insist on the misuse and exploitation through the wrong interpretation and implementation of the Islamic principles. When Zainab is told by the jailer that she is being transferred to another place, she curses Zia that, 'May worms eat the innards of the person who is taking me away from my home. May his children not see his face in death' (Hanif, 2008, p. 169). Her curse is heard by a crow whom she has just fed and according to a popular myth the only way a curse can work, 'is if a crow hears a curse from someone who has fed him to a full stomach and then carries it to the person who has been cursed' (Hanif, 2008, p. 169).

Zia, following the advice once given to him by Nicolas Ceausescu, leaves the president house on a gardener's bicycle, with his face covered in a shawl, in order to experience what general public thinks of him. After paddling for half an hour in the dark of night he does not come across anybody and wonders:

What if he was ruling a country without any inhabitants?  
What if it was a ghost country? What if there was really  
nobody out there? [...] What if everybody had migrated  
somewhere else and he was ruling a country where nobody  
lived except his army, his bureaucrats and his bodyguards?

(Hanif, 2008, p. 223)

His thoughts reveal his relationship with the general public and his concern for those he has been ruling for the last many years. He is so detached from the general masses and confined in the power corridors of an imaginary world that he could never know of the feelings and problems of those whom he claimed to serve. He is stopped by a policeman soon who mistakes him as a common man, forces him to hold his ears in a rooster pose and makes fun of the president. After realizing that he is being misinformed about his popularity by General Akhtar, he replaces him with General Beg as the new ISI chief. Ali Shigri and Obaid, who both had been rotting in the Lahore Fort for plotting to kill Zia, are released from there by the new ISI administration and allowed to rejoin the academy.

Hanif does not regard Zia as the only imposter in the novel but most of the military personnel, particularly the high ranking officers, are somehow or the other financially and morally corrupt. Before General Zia, Pakistan had seen two martial laws imposed by the army Generals. Brigadier TM, General Zia's security incharge, while inspecting the trophy cabinet in the Army House for any security risk, looks at the photos of these generals and wonders,

They had progressively got fatter and that the medals on their chests had multiplied. He came to the end of the rows of photographs and stood in front of a large portrait. In this oil painting, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan, was wearing a crisp Savile Row suit and was absorbed in studying a document. With a monocle in his left eye and his intense gaze, Jinnah looked like a tortured eighteenth-century chemist on the verge of a new discovery.  
(Hanif, 2008, p 153)

The comparison of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's portrait with those of other military generals' is remarkable. The two army generals who ruled the country as martial law

administrators or presidents are not only fat but the number of medals on their uniform indicates as if they were more anxious about their ranks and their pride instead of the country they were heading. Whereas on the other hand Jinnah, the founder of the country, is absorbed in reading some documents and appears as a lean and tortured person in his portrait. Contrary to the corrupt and megalomaniac generals, he is concerned about the betterment of his people and progress of the country. Frye (1964) argues that many satirist texts assert the implicit use of some moral norm or standard against which the object of satire is placed to transgress. By setting two norms against each other, they are made to compete by the writer who uses this contrast as a narrative strategy to satirize one of the two norms. Frye asserts that, 'Of course a moral norm is inherent in satire: satire presents something as grotesque: the grotesque is by definition a deviant from a norm: the norm makes the satire satiric' (Frye, 1964, p. 9). He further goes on to argue:

One strategy used by authors to address the possibility of misunderstanding is to incorporate into the text an embodiment of positive norms – a character or explicit set of ideas that contrasts with the transgressing satiric target'  
(Frye, 1964, p. 21)

Hanif also uses this strategy to contrast the Pakistani military general with Jinnah. Jinnah's contributions for Pakistan, before and after the partition, are irrefutable. On the other hand, the role of the army generals in the political history of Pakistan has always been considered controversial. They have been criticized for toppling democratic governments, implementing unjustified and unlawful martial law and strengthening the religious factions in the country. For the informed Pakistani readers, this comparison results into obvious disliking of the army generals as Jinnah

is an unarguably sacred personality for them. By situating the two in contrast to each other, Hanif gets the chance to satirize and make a mockery of the military elite of Pakistan. He tries to foreground his protest against the abuse of power, carried out by Zia and others of his league, to religiously radicalize the Pakistani society. But he is also disappointed at the lack of efforts by the general masses to challenge and resist the manipulative and suppressive actions of the military rulers. One particular episode where Ali Shigri is imprisoned in the Lahore Fort along with the secretary general of All Pakistan Sweepers Union, both accused of plotting to kill Zia, is of great significance in this regard. The conversations between the two are quite revealing of the submissive and indifferent situation of the lower and the lower middle classes of Pakistan. The All Pakistan Sweepers Union went on strike in 1979 thinking that the people would listen to their protests, but nothing happens and nobody bothers. The secretary general recalls:

The idea was that people faced with so much uncollected garbage would rise up in solidarity with us. But nobody even noticed. Our people get used to everything. Even the stench of their own garbage.

(Hanif, 2008, p, 140)

It is a sweeper who is intent on bringing a change by somehow making the nation realize about the gravity of the deterioration around them. His efforts to get his protest registered completely go unnoticed even when the people have to face garbage piling up at their doors. His lament that ‘our people get used to everything’ (Hanif, 2008, p, 140) describes the state of the whole of the Pakistani nation that they are not easily stirred and have become so stagnant that nothing can motivate them to struggle for a better future. The use of word ‘everything’ refers to accepting every

atrocities on the part of the Pakistani nation, including both the personal and the political.

As the end of the novel approaches, everything starts to converge together towards the day of Zia's death. General Akhtar, dreaming to become the new president of Pakistan, plots to kill Zia by mixing the poisonous VX gas in the air freshener system of the Pak One. There are crates of mangoes, with a possible bomb in them, placed in the plane as a gift from All Pakistan Mango Farmers Cooperative. Ali Shigri is also ready, with the tip of his sword dipped in poison, to kill Zia and lastly the crow that was carrying Zainab's curse is also snoozing in an orchard near the Garrison 5, Bahawalpur from where Pak One is about to take off with Zia, Arnold Raphel and many other top Generals of Pakistan Army aboard. Ali Shigri succeeds in poisoning Zia with a gentle nudge by the tip of his sword on his hand. The plane gets filled with the VX gas soon after the takeoff when the air-conditioner is switched on, the crow hits the plane's engine and possibly the bomb in one of the mango crates also explodes. Pak One crashes in the desert and all the people aboard burn to their deaths. Hanif uses the ambiguity, still surrounding the reasons of the crash of Pak One and the death of Zia to explore various facets of the Pakistani politics, role and influence of the US and Saudi governments on the military and political elite of Pakistan and the process of Islamization of the country. Furthermore, by using a Quranic verse as the central trope of his narrative, Hanif is successful in deconstructing and challenging the misuse of the religious discourse in the socio-political strata of Pakistan.

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) explores the personality of General Zia-ul-Haq by showing him as a person with many contradictions. He used Islam as a political manoeuvre to win masses' support and to appease USA by preparing an army of religious extremists. His obsession to Islamize the Pakistani society led to an ever increasing divide in the social, sectarian and religious structures of the country. His Islamic judicial and strategic reforms strengthened the extremist religious groups, caused social fragmentation and marginalization and exploitation of the women. Hanif, as a paracolonial writer, further criticizes the role of the US and the Saudi governments for encouraging Zia to manipulate and harm the social and political structures of Pakistan in order to ensure the success of their own agendas. General Zia used Islam to shape Pakistan's history marked with misuse of Islam and religious discourse to manipulate masses' religious affiliation, introduce suppressive laws and win political allegiances. Hanif reverses the situation and uses Islam to expose Zia as an imposter by situating his character in the historical context and satirizing his understanding of Islam. Zia's consultation of Quran as a horoscope, absurd interpretation of the religious decrees, strengthening of extremist religious groups and decision to join USA and Saudi Arabia to counter the Russian invasion in Afghanistan are some of the examples through which Hanif criticizes Zia. Hanif creates and then maintains a very delicate balance between fiction and history. He picks facts from the national history of Pakistan like the nexus of Pakistani military, USA and Saudi Arabia, General Zia's obsession with Islam, religious laws and mysterious crash of Pak One and intermingles them with various fictional stories to



mock General Zia-ul-Haq, satirize his decisions and to create suspense. By incorporating a real event in his narrative, Hanif further challenges the discourse of various religious parties in Pakistan to whom General Zia-ul-Haq is a hero and a true servant of Islam. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) successfully presents an account of Pakistan's political history of 1980s that unfortunately is marked with so many deceptions and conspiracy theories.

## **6.2: Our Lady of Alice Bhatti: A Requiem of Modern Pakistan**

*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) is a satirical representation of the modern day Pakistani society narrated by a Christian nurse, Alice Bhatti. Set in Karachi, the biggest city of the country, the novel gives an account of a woman who belongs to the poor, marginalized and downtrodden Christian community in Pakistan. She is struggling to define her place by resisting the patriarchal social structures. The narrative's strength is in the fact that Hanif uses dark comedy to challenge the powerful discourses, like religion and patriarchy, as mode of exploitation and suppression. Unlike Hamid, who is more interested to probe into the issue of terrorism and its impact on the Pakistani society, Hanif is keen to deconstruct the social and economic structures of the Pakistani society. In *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) Hanif intends to explore the status of minorities and place of women in the social strata of the country. Instead of writing about terrorism or other larger significant political dilemmas threatening Pakistan, he provides an inward gaze and glimpses from the lives of the marginalized and suppressed communities of the country. While doing so he further explores the impact of economy and religion on the lives of ordinary people and their struggle against all the prejudices they have to live with. Feeding upon his past memories, like his mother's death in a hospital and his life in Karachi, Hanif creates a world of his own which is simultaneously messed

up, funny and absurd. Even though his protagonist has to cope with the miserable and hopeless situations, she refuses to succumb to the injustices done to her.

Alice Bhatti, the protagonist of the novel, is not just a witness but also a victim of the growing social, religious, gender and ethnic divide in the Pakistani society. She is a woman who is thrice colonized, suppressed and marginalized in the postcolonial, patriarchal and Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Her journey through life is fraught with difficulties and filled with episodes of religious and gender discrimination, till she is killed by her own husband. Unlike many women in Pakistan, she opts to resist and challenge the suppressive structures of the society and refuses to become a social outcast. Noor, the ward boy at Sacred Heart Hospital of all Ailments, describes Alice when he says that, 'her fatal flaw is not her family background but her total inability to say simple things like excuse me and thank you' (Hanif, 2011, p. 22) which explains her resilient nature well.

Divided into thirty chapters and an epilogue, Hanif uses Present tense to narrate the life of Alice Bhatti. By doing so he successfully creates a sense of immediacy and closeness for the reader who, along with the protagonist, experiences everything in the novel. The use of the word 'our' in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), is significant in many ways. Apart from associating the reader with the protagonist, it carries a very important reference to Christian theology. In the Christian theological tradition 'Our Lady' refers either to a saint or particularly to Madonna (mother of Jesus Christ). Hanif uses this honorific and much esteemed religious title to create a highly esteemed persona of Alice and then later contrasts it with the treatment she

receives from the society at large and her husband in particular. It is not just the narrator who thinks highly of Alice but the reader is also tricked into associating himself with her and is made to understand the tale she has to tell. The title further produces a strong effect of bathos, where the reader is expecting something grand and exalted but instead is presented with a religiously and socially exploited and a poor and mistreated nurse.

Alice Bhatti is an ex-convict who has served a sentence of fourteen months in the Borstal jail for bludgeoning and seriously injuring a corrupt surgeon. She has some miraculous healing powers like her father and has had fights with extremist Muslim students during training in her nursing school. Alice has been a woman of resilience throughout her life and has always tried to fight back against the injustices done to her. Hanif remarks:

Her twenty-seven-year-old body is a compact like war zone where competing warriors have trampled and left their marks. She had fought back often enough, with less calibrated viciousness maybe, definitely never with a firearm, but she has never accepted a wound without trying to give one back.

(Hanif, 2011, p. 174)

The female body has often been used as a painting canvas, in the writings of contemporary Pakistani fiction writers, where society has left its imprints. Shamsie's protagonist Hiroko in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) is doomed to live with bird shaped burnt marks on her back as a result of the atomic explosion. Suleri on the other hand is more ruthless when she claims in *Meatless Days* (1989) that 'Men live in homes, and women live in bodies' (Suleri, 1989, p. 143). Hanif, Suleri and Shamsie all use female body as a space to register the social injustices done to women in Pakistan.

It's not just the scars that they carry in their memories but it is also the scars on their bodies that reveal a past filled with deprivation and subjugation.

The novel begins with an account of Alice's interview for a Grade 4 Replacement Junior Nurse, in the Catholic-run Sacred Heart Hospital of all Ailments. Hanif starts the novel from a point which demarcates the past and the future in the life of Alice Bhatti. Her interview is symbolic of the fact that she is trying to convince the jury that she is worthy of getting accepted as a suitable and respectable person of the society. She is sitting in front of a panel of doctors and Senior Sister Hina Alvi and wondering about the outcome of this interview. Right from the very first chapter, Hanif starts to raise issues like faith and religious discrimination in the Pakistani society in a satirical tone. Alice's father's bitter remark on the first page of the novel sets the tone for the pages to follow when he says that, 'These Muslas will make you clean their shit and then complain that you stink' (Hanif, 2011, p. 1). A few pages later Dr. James Pereira, a Christian doctor at Sacred Heart Hospital, also thinks in despair that: 'not all Christians are sweepers. He also fears the retort: But all sweepers are Christians' (Hanif, 2011, p. 8). Hanif through Dr. Pereira's thoughts highlights the plight and unfortunate situation of the Christian community in Pakistan where being a Christian has become synonymous with being a sweeper. The larger Muslim community of Pakistan has failed to accept them as a respectable part of the society. They have not only been subjected to social injustices but the blasphemy laws have also been used to vindicate them in the recent past.

The first chapter briefly introduces the characters of Dr. James Pereira, Ortho (short for orthopaedic or an orthodox Muslim) Sir, Sister Hina Alvi, Noor and above all Alice Bhatti. Ortho Sir in spite of a diamond-shaped mark on his head (showing that he offers his prayers regularly) and two recent visits to Mecca for pilgrimage seems less concerned about determining Alice's suitability for the job and more about some imaginary nipples on a female body. Ortho's double meaning not only refers to his being an orthopaedic but also to his being an orthodox Muslim. Even though he pretends to be a practicing Muslim, he is morally and religiously corrupt. The G. Squad (Gentlemen's Squad) of Karachi Police is another satirical representation of the contradictions that the Pakistani society is fraught with. Though the G. Squad is to protect the people of the city against the crimes, it actually operates as an unofficial police squad of rapists, torturers and sharp shooters. The name of the squad is ironic as they mostly capture those whom they think or feel are a threat and then murder them without registering any formal case against them. Inspector Malangi, the head of the G. Squad, acts both as the prosecutor and the jury and his verdicts usually go against the unfortunate captured souls. Teddy Butt, who is to become Alice's lover later in the story, works for the G. Squad as an informer and a tout. Inspector Malangi thinks of himself and his squad a necessity in a city like Karachi where 'you can get someone cut up for a thousand rupees' (Hanif, 2011, p. 25).

The social and ethnic divide in the Pakistani society is also obvious during Alice's visit to the Charya Ward, The Centre for Medical and Psychological Diseases.

Sister Hina Alvi calls it a nut house and to her, ‘the whole country is a nuthouse’ (Hanif, 2011, p. 28) and believes that whole of the country is full of lunatics. While describing the patients in the ward, she remarks:

These boys in Charya Ward are suffering from what everyone suffers from: life. They just take it a bit more seriously, sensitive types who think too much, care too much, who refuse to laugh at bad jokes.

(Hanif, 2011, p. 28)

Moreover, the list of the patients’ names admitted in the Charya Ward is also revealing. There are ‘six Mohammads, three Ahmeds, two Alis’ (Hanif, 2011, p. 30). These names signify the religious and sectarian groups and minorities in Pakistan and their number in the ward roughly indicates their population in the country. Mohammad is the most common and loved name in Pakistan as it is the name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Ahmed represents the Ahmadia community in Pakistan who in spite of their claims to be Muslims are officially denied of this status under the law and the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Ali is the most popular and respected name for the Shiite community in Pakistan who are in minority and under violent attacks by some extremist religious organizations of other Islamic sects. By putting these people in a ward for mental and psychological diseases Hanif metaphorically puts all the religious sects of Pakistan amongst those who are considered a risk to the social stability. He satirizes their extremist approach towards life and their militant force and wings. They are not only causing sectarian clashes in the country but also disturbing a peaceful social structure of Pakistan. Charya Ward is a microcosm of the whole Pakistani society which is divided into many factions on the basis of class, religion and sectarian differences.

Joseph Bhatti, Alice's father, finds a dead baby girl in the drain of a housing society. When he tells Alice about it, her remarks show the anger and frustration she feels on the meaninglessness of a woman's life in the Pakistani society and retorts:

I think it's a sign that there is no place a woman can go and deliver a baby, that there is no place for her even when her water is breaking. It's a sign that human life can be flushed down the toilet. It's a sign that nobody gives a fuck about signs.

(Hanif, 2011, p. 50)

Alice's frustration is representative of the fact that the patriarchal society of Pakistan has failed to give women their due rights. Instead they have been relegated to the extreme margins of the social structure and their existence has become meaningless. The use of word 'woman' instead of defining them is used as a master word (Spivak, 1990, p. 104) to marginalize them further. By reducing them to their body and by refusing any progressive outlook, the word woman has become synonymous with deprived and suppressed in Pakistan. Being a woman and then being the daughter of a Christian sweeper is enough to make Alice's life miserable in Pakistan. The exploitative socio-cultural and religious discourse not only marginalized women in Pakistan but it also led to their generalized, suppressive and stereotypical representation. The dominance of the religious narrative in the Pakistani society got translated into a marginalized and restrictive lifestyle for women. Spivak (1988) argues:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernisation.

(Spivak, 1988, p. 306)



Pakistani woman's voice is silenced in the nationalist discourses and their representations are demeaning. The Pakistani fiction writers, in reaction to the suppressive national discourse, represent the suppressed and marginalized lives of the Pakistani women and give them space and voice through their narratives.

Joseph Bhatti is an interesting character who, in spite of being a poor and downtrodden sweeper, has his own philosophies and theological interpretations. He can cure people's ulcers by reciting verses from Quran, the Muslims' holy book. He feels pride in being a sweeper and has his justifications for his pride. He tells Alice:

Choohras were here before everything. Choohras were here before the sacred was built, before Yassoo was resurrected, before Muslas came on their horses, even before Hindus decided they were too exalted to clean up their own shit. And when all of this is finished, Choohras will still be here.  
(Hanif, 2011, P. 52)

For Joseph, being a Choorach (sweeper) is being eternal. He believes that sweepers have always existed in the past and they are the only part of the human race which will keep on existing even when everything else is finished. Unfortunately, this eternity is not just limited to existence but it also carries the plight with it that comes from being a sweeper, the least respected job in many societies. Alice also understands the bitter reality in her father's remarks but her resilient nature makes her snap back and she retorts with displeasure that, 'Yes, when everything is finished, Choohras will still be here. And Cockroaches too' (Hanif, 2001, p. 52). Her anger and frustration is evident in the fact that she realizes that her and her community's worth is no better than cockroaches in the Pakistani Muslim society.

Alice has been placed on a night shift in the VIP room 2 at Sacred Heart Hospital to take care of a very rich but dying old lady, Begum Qazalbash. The car in which her family has brought her to the hospital, a gleaming double-cabin Toyota Surf, is parked in corridor. The description of the car, its owner and his bodyguards speaks of their high status.

The number plate bears no numbers. In red lightning bolts it says Devil of the Desert. Everyone seems to understand what that means [...] at the back of the cabin, in the open half of the vehicle, are seated four men in uniform. It's not the uniform of any state institution or a recognizable security agency [...] Their Kalashnikovs are pointed vaguely outward, the muzzles lazily tracking any passer-by [...] They had seen the owner step out of the vehicle: Rolex, Ray-Bans, Bally, Montblanc; he walked like someone wearing a million rupees' worth of accessories in a place where half a pint of O-positive costs two hundred rupees.

(Hanif, 2011, pp. 53-54)

Hanif has sketched a stark depiction of the class difference between the poor and the rich of the country. He has tried to expose the morally and financially corrupt Pakistani society where class divide is greater than ever. People like Alice, Noor and HinaAlvi are striving to survive with meagre salaries, no sense of security and verbal and physical abuse in a society where people like Begum Qazalbash and his family move in expensive cars and wear the most expensive brands. As a result of these class differences, religious extremism and sectarian clashes, the Pakistani society has become too volatile. When Teddy Butt fires a stray bullet, after being rejected by Alice, the riots start and the whole city of Karachi is closed for three days. The depiction of these riots and protests is accurate and revealing of the volcanic situation of the city:

The city stops moving for three days [...] The bullet pierces the right shoulder of the truck driver [...] He jams the brake pedal to the floor. A rickshaw trying to dodge the swerving truck gets entangled [...] Five children, all between seven and nine become a writhing mess of fractured skull, blood, crayons and Buffy the Vampire Slayer lunchboxes. A size four shoe is stuck between two Goodyears.

(Hanif, 2011, p. 70)

Such is the situation in Karachi where during these riots innocent people are killed, cars and tyres are burnt and public and government property is destroyed. A stray bullet from a dejected lover results in ethnic and sectarian clashes which grips the whole city for three days. Alice is struggling hard to survive in a city which is losing its peace and calm, where people are killed for a thousand rupees only and where women are stared at, kidnapped and raped. She, being a nurse, has witnessed many a days when:

She didn't see a woman shot or hacked, strangled or suffocated, poisoned or burnt, hanged or buried alive. Suspicious husband, brother protecting his honour, father protecting his honour, son protecting his honour, jilted lover avenging his honour, feuding farmers settling their water disputes, moneylenders collecting their interest: most of life's arguments, it seemed, got settled by doing various things to a woman's body.

(Hanif, 2011, p. 96)

Alice knows well about the status of a woman in the Pakistani patriarchal society where she is just an object used to settle old scores. The lines quoted above are like a requiem about the miserable situation of women in Pakistan. Hanif's satire is at its best when he says that Alice, 'has lived long enough to know that cutting up women is a sport older than cricket but just as popular and equally full of obscure rituals and intricate rules' (Hanif, 2011, pp. 95-96). After injuring the Junior Kazalbash, in self-defence, even a strong and resilient girl like Alice is left with no other option but to

accept Teddy Butt's proposal for her own safety and security as a 'survival strategy employed by Catholics in predominantly Islamic societies' (Hanif, 2011, p. 92).

Religion and a person's faith is one of the many important issues that Hanif explores in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011). Religious extremism has not only led to sectarian divide in the Pakistani society but also to a misuse of the blasphemy laws against other religious minorities living in the country. Alice not only becomes a mouthpiece against such religious misuse and atrocities but also a tool to explore the position of faith in a person's life. Hanif's use of names like Mohammad, Ahmed and Ali in the Charya Ward of Sacred Heart Hospital highlights his dissatisfaction with the rise of religious extremism in the Pakistani society. He not only questions their extremist positions but also questions their inability to contribute anything positive to the society at large. His satirical depiction of a mental patient bowing before god reveals of his stance when he says that:

Then he goes down on his knees and prostrates himself in front of her as if he is in a mosque. Alice Bhatti has seen people do this in the Sacred's open air prayer area, and the gesture has always seemed a bit ridiculous to her. Raising your arse to the sky has never seemed to her the best way to express your devotion. But that is probably the best some people can do [...] not that you can talk about these things in public and hope to live.

(Hanif, 2011, p. 34)

For Hanif, religion is much more than the physical performance of rituals and he mocks the person and his way of showing his devotion. The last line of the above quote is very significant when Alice thinks that it is not safe to disagree with these religious fanatics openly. Saying such things in the public might lead to serious repercussions. Joseph Bhatti, on the other hand, has his own ideas and often tells

other people that prophets were sent in this world to take care of humanity's refuse. The priest from the church thinks of him as a closet Musla but he is not the only one who talks about religion in Pakistan, the whole country seems to be obsessed with the idea of god and religion. Hanif comments on the situation as:

They want me to literally see God in vegetables. For the last five years, every year there is an aubergine somewhere that, when you slice it, it has the word Allah running through it. I am sure if you slice it the other way you can see your own husband's face and if you move it sideways you can read something obscene. There is always a cloud shaped like Mohammad. I know some people see Yassoo on a cross or his mother in a pretty dress in every seasonal fruit. Why do people need that kind of evidence? Isn't there always a flood or an earthquake or a child run over by a speeding car driven by another child to remind us that God exists?

(Hanif, 2011, p. 188)

Amid all this chaos, rising misogyny and religious extremism in Pakistan, Alice tries to get away from the French Colony, marries Teddy Butt and starts a new life with her husband. It failed and unfortunately it is Teddy Butt who kills her by throwing sulphuric acid on her.

Hanif ends the novel with an epilogue which is an open letter from Joseph Bhatti to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints seeking the status of sainthood for his daughter. The epilogue is humorous at some points and pitiful at others. He presents a rereading of all of Alice's actions and motivations justifying her struggle in life. Hanif confuses the boundaries of real and surreal by fantasizing Alice's miserable and pathetic death into a ceremonial fable where Holy Mother descends on earth to invite Alice to share her throne. The ending relates to the title where the term 'Our Lady' is used for Alice to present her as a reflection of the Madonna. It appears

as if the tale has completed the full circle and Alice after living her quota of miseries in life has been exalted to the status of Mary. For Joseph, Alice was a reflection of the Jesus Christ as she suffered throughout her life only to heal others through her miracles.

*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) is very different from *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* in terms of the issues it raises and the way it does so. Hanif uses humour and satire to fictionalize a particular moment from the political history of Pakistan in his first novel whereas his second novel is focused on the social fragmentation with characters that belong to the lower class and struggle to survive the gender, religious and ethnic discriminations. The tone of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) is very serious and the overall mood of the novel is depressing. The only thing that keeps the reader engrossed in the narrative is the struggle between Alice's resilience and society's ability to crush any individual who challenges its norms. The issues that Hanif has raised in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), of gender discrimination, female subjugation and religious minorities' being targeted in Pakistan, are very relevant in defining some of the dark aspects of the Pakistani social structure.

It is interesting to point out that the way Hanif has explored the issue of female suppression in the Pakistani society is very different from the way Suleri does in *Meatless Days* (1989). Suleri, being a female writer, is more interested in the psychological impacts of the marginalization of women in Pakistan. She is concerned with the issues of female identity, a woman's place in the household and her relationship with the family. Be it herself or her mother or sister, they all are

subjugated by their male family members. Suleri's memoir accommodates characters who were well educated and politically and socially well informed. Hanif's protagonist carries a triple curse. Apart from being a woman, she not only belongs to a religious minority but also comes from an economic background which is at the bottom of the class structure in Pakistan. Furthermore, Hanif places her protagonist in a society full of men and leaves her to struggle in order to find a respectable space for her. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), unlike *Meatless Days* (1989), explores the physical violence carried out on women and the impact it has on their struggle for freedom and due rights. Both the writers have tried to highlight a disturbing issue in the Pakistani society but their sensibilities are expressed in totally different manner through their narrative. It is a common incident in the male dominant Pakistani society where women are exploited and murdered on daily basis but Hanif has emphasized that each such story is special and needs to be heard. The female characters, despite being forceful, much stronger and clear in their ideas, suffer at the hands of male characters that are confused, corrupt and think of women as their property.

Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2001) is close to *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) as both the novels try to deconstruct Pakistani society. Hamid has chosen Lahore, the second largest city of Pakistan, whereas Hanif goes for Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan and the capital of the Sindh province. Both the metropolitan cities are economic hubs of the country and are also known for their rich cultural life. Through their fiction, both the writers have explored the social problems and class divide in

these cities. It is significant to note that in both the novels class divide and the resulting injustices emerge as a strong reason for the dissatisfaction and exploitation of the general masses. Due to the inability to have a respectable life, anger and frustration is on the rise in the lower and the lower middle classes. Both, Hamid and Hanif, argue that unavailability of opportunities, economic disparities and financial crisis are contributing in the deterioration of the social structures and a rise in religious extremism.

Moreover the difference in the gender of the protagonists also furnishes a totally different perspective to both the novels. Though *Moth Smoke* (2001) explores the issue of female subjugation in the Pakistani society, it appears as a sub plot and the whole novel revolves around the choices and predicament of the middle class male protagonist Daru. On the other hand *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) explores the Pakistani society through the gaze of a lower class, Christian female nurse and hence female suppression on the basis of religious and class discrimination emerge as main issues. Hanif tries to address the socio-economic chaos in the country through his narration of a poor Christian woman's tale of suffering. Alice Bhatti resists the atrocities done to her and refuses any form of injustice, be it social or gender biased. Unfortunately whatever is the social or religious background, being a woman guarantees a suppressed and miserable life in the patriarchal society of Pakistan. Moreover, Hanif has also managed to highlight various economic and religious factors which have their share in the decay of the social structure in Pakistan. Social divide, on the basis of class, gender, ethnic and religious differences, has increased in



the Pakistani society during the last few decades and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) provides an indigenous lens and commentary on it. Hanif, as a paracolonial writer, instead of blaming the colonial legacy or West for the anarchy and chaos in Pakistan, highlights the flaws within the social structure of Pakistan.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

In contrast to Indo-Anglian fiction, a detailed analytical study of Anglophone Pakistani fiction as a distinct body of work with specific characteristics has remained an under-researched area till now. As argued earlier, Tariq Rehman's *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* (1991) had been the only effort in this context for a long period of time. Rehman's analysis focused on the Pakistani literature produced until 1980s with a particular emphasis on the fiction of Ahmed Ali, Zulfiqar Ghose and Bapsi Sidhwa. Cara N. Cilano's (2013) *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State*, published during the course of this research, remains the second book length study that explores the Anglophone Pakistani fiction in detail. I believe the current research is the first attempt to explore the fictional representations of the socio-political and cultural history of Pakistan, while situating it in the rise of religious extremism in the country. Four Pakistani writers Sara Suleri, Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid and Mohammad Hanif were selected for this thesis. They had not only been a witness to various political changes and crises taking place at the national level but have also seen religious discourse emerging as a strong tool of political domination and exploitation in Pakistan. Unlike their predecessors, whose fiction was mainly focused on colonialism, its aftermath and partition of the Indian subcontinent, these writers are more concerned about the current social

fragmentation, economic failure and political instability within the country. Their fiction tries to represent the plight of the Pakistani people, discusses and deconstructs various socio-political and economic issues and hints towards the possible solutions for a peaceful future.

A detailed analysis of Pakistani fiction indicates a new shift in postcolonial fiction writing. Unlike the traditional postcolonial writers, these Pakistani writers tend to distance their writings from their colonial history and its aftermath as a major reason for their current social and economic disintegration. Instead, the research establishes that the Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers hold their political and military leadership responsible for being unable to run the state affairs properly. Their inconsistent policies and their wrong decisions, motivated by political and financial gains, have led the country and the nation to a path of disaster and chaos. Critics like Jay (2005) have used the term 'Post-Post-Colonial Condition' to describe the phenomenon where writers try to dissociate their writings from the socio-political and economic exploitation of the colonial era or any form of its continuation, but the term has not gained much popularity. I argue through this research that 'Paracolonialism' or 'Paracolonial Fiction' is a much suitable term to describe and define such fiction or literature which tries to alienate or distance itself from the colonial experience. Even though Pakistan as a postcolonial nation has existed under the British colonial rule and the fiction or literature produced in Pakistan comes under the umbrella term postcolonial fiction, the Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers writing after 1988, particularly Hamid, consciously try to distance their

fiction from any traces of that era. Hence, I argue that this ambivalent presence and absence of colonialism in such fiction is best described through the use of prefix *para*, as the prefix *para* refers to ‘beyond or distinct from but analogous to’ something (OED). Instead of using colonialism as a scapegoat for a country’s current socio-political and economic failures, the paracolonial fiction tries to get rid of its historical baggage, focuses more on recent circumstances and contextualizes these failures in a criticism of the post-independence political and military elite of the country.

Suleri, Hamid and Hanif deconstruct the faltering social, economic and political situation in Pakistan, but while doing so they criticize the contemporary political leadership and military elite instead of blaming the colonial British Empire. Hamid is most obvious in his choice of ignoring the colonial era when his protagonists, in search of glorious past and historical references, fall back on the pre-colonial times of the Mughal dynasty in the Indian subcontinent. Suleri and Hanif also focus their attention on General Zia and his policies as a major reason of social and political chaos in Pakistan. Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows* (2009), in spite of discussing the partition of Indo-Pak subcontinent in 1947, does not carry it on as a cause of the religious radicalization of the Pakistani society. The recent generation of the paracolonial Pakistani writers is making a conscious tactical move of distancing itself from the colonial history and is rather trying to focus on the current national leadership, to hold them responsible and make them accountable for the failure of Pakistan as a nation state.

I believe that implications of using the term paracolonialism to define this fiction can be manifold. A detailed study of the recent fiction emerging from other Pakistani writers, along with those from other postcolonial nations, can help to understand the changing social behaviours and evolving political sensibilities in these countries. Postcolonialism has not only deconstructed the exploitation and manipulation of the native cultures and societies, it has also highlighted and presented the political struggle and physical resistance carried out to gain freedom. Many governments use anti-colonial resistance as a binding force to hold the society together. They use it as a narrative to mobilize the masses to play an active role in their country's progress. Moreover, such anti-colonial resistances tend to play a dominant role in the identity formation of nations and to determine and highlight various aspects of national pride and identity. By letting go of this colonial and postcolonial history, these writers are letting go of a whole baggage in which the identity structures of their nations are rooted. It is necessary to explore the reasons that have forced these writers to decide for such a radical break from their past. My initial conjecture through the analysis of four paracolonial Pakistani fiction writers' work indicates a dissatisfaction of these Pakistani writers with their country's political and military elite as they used the colonial baggage as an excuse for their incompetence and a lack of will to serve their people. Pakistani writers are not only using this shift in their fiction as a protest against these corrupt leaders but are also using it to blame and hold them accountable for their country's social, economic and political crises. It is their dissatisfaction with the country's current faltering situation

and a manipulation of their national history that has forced them to deviate from traditional Postcolonial fiction writing and to look for new ways to highlight the issues that their society and country faces.

Furthermore, I believe that an analysis of the recently produced fiction from other postcolonial nations would add new dimensions to the term paracolonialism. For example: are the fiction writers from other postcolonial nations like India, Bangladesh and Africa also using new narrative strategies to register their dissatisfaction with the current situation of their country. The term paracolonialism opens up new perspectives and angles to explore and revisit a large body of fiction all across the world. I believe that the fiction that can be described through the term paracolonialism has its gaze focused on the future rather than trying to explore the past culture, language and tradition. Hence, I argue that this thesis strongly suggests the need for an exploration and reading of postcolonial fiction from a new perspective as a re-reading of this fiction might help the world to understand these societies in a much better way.

It is also important to highlight that there are some common themes and issues that run through the writings of all the four writers. The analysis further establishes that these writers are Janus-faced in their exploration of the issues that Pakistan is facing. On the one hand they try to deconstruct various indigenous issues like Islamization, feminism, class division and a corrupt political and military leadership, while on the other hand they challenge the Western, particularly US, discourse that constructs Pakistan as a terrorist country. Their fiction contextualizes

the catastrophic incident of 9/11 in the Islamization of the Pakistani society during General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime. The analysis establishes that these writers believe that General Zia's Islamization project, carried out in collaboration with USA and Saudi Arabia, led to the empowerment of the militant religious groups and the emergence of an extremist religious discourse resulting in a divided and fragmented Pakistani society.

All the four writers have discussed General Zia's manipulative political strategy to Islamize the Pakistani society and its impacts on the socio-political strata through their novels. They criticize him for religiously radicalizing the masses and see it as a major reason behind the social fragmentation in Pakistan. They further hold him responsible for the rise of Taliban and other terrorist groups in the country and Pakistan's image as a terrorist country on the international scene. They believe that General Zia-ul-Haq empowered the religio-political parties through a government sponsored and unlimited availability of financial resources and access to arms. Through their fiction, these Pakistani novelists explore the nexus between Pakistan, USA and Saudi Arabia during the 1980s. Pakistani military trained these militias of hardcore religious fundamentalists, with the other two countries providing the financial and political support, to use them as a strategic asset against the Russians in Afghanistan. Moreover, they believe that the political and military establishment of Pakistan propagated the narrative of jihad in order to mobilize the youth to participate in the Afghan resistance against the Russian forces. Once the Afghan-Russia conflict was over, these militias of religious extremists started using

their resources and energies to reinstate an Islamic system of government first in Afghanistan and later throughout the whole world. Unfortunately this strategic asset, created to counter the Russian invasion, backfired when Taliban attacked the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001. After 9/11, USA revised its foreign policy and the Taliban were termed as the biggest threat to the US solidarity and world peace. Both Hamid and Shamsie argue, through their narratives, that the revision of the US foreign policy after 9/11 labelled Pakistan as an ally of the terrorists and Taliban. Moreover, the presence of Taliban in the north-western tribal areas of Pakistan and their suspected links with the Pakistani military also led towards Pakistan being labelled as sympathizer of the terrorists and of other such religious and extremist groups.

The research further establishes that the Pakistani fiction writers have taken up the issue of terrorism and Pakistani military's suspected links with it on two levels. On the one hand, they have criticized General Zia-ul-Haq for his political strategies and (mis)using Islam and religious discourse as a tool to legitimize and prolong his otherwise illegal rule. On the other hand, these paracolonial Pakistani fiction writers act as political commentators and interveners as they try to dissect anti-Pakistan hegemonic Western print and media discourse in a post-9/11 and post War on Terror era. With their texts rooted in the historical and political contexts, these Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers have tried to contextualize 9/11 in the Islamization of the Pakistani society, Afghan resistance against the Russian invasion, Pakistan's role and involvement in terrorism in the region and various social and



cultural implications that these factors and events had on Pakistan and the rest of the world. 9/11 and its aftermath emerges as a strong and dominant theme in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) and Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* unearths the experiences of a Pakistani protagonist Changez who had settled in USA before 9/11 and had adopted the US culture and way of life. The novel explores the changes that Changez undergoes after 9/11 and his possible transformation into an extremist. Shamsie on the other hand does not describe how 9/11 happened but discusses a post-9/11 US society. Both the narratives intervene in the post-9/11 US discourse as they explore 9/11 and its implications from a non-US perspective. Hamid reverses the power structure in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) when the US interlocutor is made to listen and Changez, the Pakistani protagonist, is given the voice. Hamid's strategy is to involve the Western and the US readership in a dialogue and make them realize that all the Pakistanis are not terrorist suspects. Towards the end of the novel he says to his US interlocutor that, 'you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins' (Hamid, 2008, p. 209). *Burnt Shadows* (2009), on the other hand, deconstructs 9/11 and the US understanding of the rest of the world through a debate between US, Pakistani and Afghan characters moderated by a Japanese woman, Hiroko Tanaka, and challenges the US perspective on War on Terror. When Kim agrees to transport an illegal migrant Abdullah across the US border into Canada, Abdullah's comments about the US attitude towards war disturbs Kim:

War is like disease [...] countries like yours they always fight wars, but always somewhere else. The disease always happens somewhere else. It's why you fight more wars than anyone else; because you understand war least of all. You need to understand it better.

(Shamsie, 2009, p. 344)

Both Shamsie and Hamid criticize USA for implementing capitalist policies throughout the world and exploiting the weaker nations for their economic benefits and political supremacy. By putting the two most powerful discourses of the twenty first century, Islam and the US capitalism, against each other these writers furnish the Western readership with the way the Muslim community thinks about and responds to the US policy of intervention in other lands. Furthermore, by opting to write in English and acting as political ambassadors, these writers not only fight a case of a progressive and enlightened Pakistan but also try to present a positive identity of their countrymen to the rest of the world. The Anglophone Pakistani fiction writers use English language as a strategic tool not only to target the Western readership but also to comment on and intervene into the post-9/11 Western discourse. By writing in the language of the centre they are able to convey the Pakistani version of the story in the wake of global War on Terror. Moreover, by doing so they are successful in inviting the Western reader to respond and hence initiate a dialogue between the two. The analysis further establishes that these writers are not only presenting a case of Pakistan as a progressive country but are also trying to create a space where both the cultures, Western and Islamic, can engage in a debate and understand each other better. Hence, it can be argued that these writers are writing with a definite international agenda in their minds.

Suppression and exploitation of women and other minority groups is another dominant theme that emerges during the analysis. Both Suleri and Shamsie argue that religious discourse was used to marginalize women in the Pakistani society. The religious narrative was used to deprive women of their rights, restrict them to their homes and to deny them of any role in the social evolution of Pakistan. Men are so powerful in the homes and outside, that women have become a non-existent entity in the Pakistani society. Suleri's biographical details in her memoir *Meatless Days* (1989), highlighting the subjugation and helplessness of the women of her family, foreground the discriminations that women have to face in Pakistan. Her Welsh mother Mair Jones and her sister Ifat both suffered at the hands of Mr. Suleri, the strongest man in the household. Ifat who married out of her own choice and against her father's will, had to undergo new forms of suppression when she was required to adopt a new life style and learn a new language suiting her husband and his family. Samsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) records the misery of Hiroko Tanaka and Elizabeth James Burton who suffer at the hands of displacement and various legitimized acts of violence and atrocities planned in the power corridors of USA and United Kingdom. Both the female characters travel through different cultures and languages in search of a stable identity but exist as an outsider for most part of the narrative, without any sense of belonging. The research further establishes that the feminist discourse of the Pakistani writers uses female body as a metaphor to describe various kinds of atrocities done to women. Both Suleri and Shamsie argue through their fiction that the only definition a woman can find for herself in Pakistan is based on her body.

Hanif describes Alice's plight through his twenty-seven-year-old body which, 'is a compact like war zone where competing warriors have trampled and left their marks' (Hanif, 2011, p. 174). Hiroko, in *Burnt Shadows* (2009), has three bird shaped marks on her back as a memento of the nuclear explosion in Nagasaki.

The rise and empowerment of the religious factions and the emergence of a strong religious narrative in Pakistan also led to the exploitation and suppression of religious minorities like Christians, Hindus and Ahmadies. Hanif combines both forms of marginalization in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) where Alice, the protagonist of the novel, is subjected to a constant suppression for being a woman and belonging to the Christian community, a minority in Pakistan. She not only resisted against the patriarchal society but was also faced with religious discrimination throughout her life. The feminist discourse of the Anglophone Pakistani fiction represents Pakistan as a patriarchal society where women are unable to find a respectable space for themselves. Those who opt to challenge these male dominated social structures are either forced to go in exile, as Suleri did, or are murdered and silenced, as in case of Alice Bhatti, by their own family.

Class divide and an unequal distribution of resources is another important theme that emerges during the analysis. Both Hamid, in *Moth Smoke* (2001), and Hanif, in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), argue that the distance between the upper and the lower classes of Pakistan is so great that it fuels anger and frustration in those who belong to the deprived factions of society. Disparity in access to resources like cars and air-conditioners show the increasing difference between the two

classes, a sense of deprivation and the resultant frustration seeping into various ranks of the middle and lower classes. Both the characters, Daru and Murad Badshah, in *Moth Smoke* (2001), in spite of having Masters Degree, fail to earn enough to have a respectable life and are ultimately forced to indulge into a life of unlawful activities like drug trafficking and robbing the rich. They become an outsider and feel that they are not being provided with any opportunity to progress in life. The character of fundo (fundamentalist) also represent the increasing number of the frustrated youth who, finding no other option, decides to join the ranks of religious extremist forces in search of change in the socio-economic structures of the country. Hamid argues that increasing class divide is a major reason for the rise of terrorism in the Pakistani society where deprived youth, finding no other means to feed their families, join various terrorist groups.

Shamsie and Hamid propagate the need of a transnational culture to deal with various conflicting discourses and challenge the socially and culturally constructed preconceptions about other lands and people. They believe that such preconceptions not only reaffirm an already existing divide but are also used by various stronger countries as a discursive and strategic tool to justify their exploitation and manipulation of weaker nations. Hiroko Tanaka, Shamsie's protagonist in *Burnt Shadows* (2009), is a Japanese woman; who has survived the atomic bombing of Nagasaki in Japan, travels to India, marries an Indian Muslim, comes to Pakistan after the partition of the Indian subcontinent and finally settles down in USA. Her ability to adapt to new cultures and learn new languages enables her to cope with

various troublesome and disturbing moments in her life as she could leave everything behind, and survive' (Shamsie, 2009, p. 135). Her ability to put various government sanctioned criminal acts, 'in a little corner of the big picture' (Shamsie, 2009, p. 362) has taught her that the only possible way to live peacefully in today's global world is by not letting one's national affiliations become a reason for harming others. Her concept of identity is fluid, shifting and non-static which allow her past identity to disappear and adopt the culture of a new land.

A detailed study of these newly emerging paracolonial Anglophone fiction writers from Pakistan was much needed and timely. Their writings not only deconstruct various aspects of Pakistan's socio-political milieu but also explore many factors which have caused an unstable society and a faltering political structure within the country. By exploring the dark corners of their national past, giving voice to the marginalized communities and by intervening into the hegemonic Western discourse they present the whole world with new insights into Pakistan and its society. In today's world of conflicting ideologies and competing narratives it is very important to understand the viewpoints that germinate from Pakistan, a country with a central role in War on Terror and its society suffering from religious, ethnic, political and economic divide.

I argue that even though the research reveals some very important aspects of the Anglophone Pakistani fiction, there remains a large body of work by other Pakistani fiction writers which needs to be explored and studied. During the last couple of decades there are a significant number of Pakistani fiction writers

emerging on the literary scene. Nadeem Aslam, Uzma Aslam Khan, Bina Shah, Feryal Ali Gauhar, Monica Ali and Daniyal Mueenuddin are some of the other Pakistani fiction writers who have been recognized internationally. In future, as a continuation of this research project, I intend to analyze their fiction to understand what they think of contemporary Pakistan and the way they engage the international readers with their tales about their country. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to see whether their fiction conforms to the idea of paracolonialism that has emerged from the analysis of these four writers' fiction or not. Another aspect in which this study can be used as a guideline, as discussed above, is to see and analyze the contemporary fiction being produced in other postcolonial nations like Africa and India. It would be interesting to see whether Paracolonialism is a global phenomenon or is restricted to one particular region. In either case it would be significant to explore the reasons for this shift and break from the past traditional ways of postcolonial writings. A time might have come when the literary intelligentsia and writers from the once colonized nations have decided to leave the historical baggage behind them and focus more on the contemporary causes of socio-political and economic chaos in their countries.

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