

Divulging Religious Discourse In Four Anglophone Pakistani Fictions: A Textual Analysis

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Introduction

Narratives of various kinds can be found in religious discourse, constituted by a religious content or at least by a religious context. A religious content can appear in one or more of the following forms like a character presented directly or indirectly as religious or non-religious in regard to his/her identity, character traits, opinions, experiences, emotions, behavior, personal appearance, social context, knowledge, duties, wishes or intentions (e.g. a monk, an atheist, a believer). Secondly, a “supernatural” being (related to a religious belief system) as part of the narrative world. Thirdly, direct or indirect references to religious texts, beliefs, rituals, places or buildings within character or narrator discourse. In this context, this paper unveils the religious narratives in four Pakistani fictions written in English which includes; *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie, *Meatless Days* by Sara Suleri, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Red Birds* by Mohammed Hanif. It also disclose the religious stereotypes in global context of Japan, US, Turkey, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Burnt Shadows

Burnt Shadows distills much of the most notorious history of the past 65 years into its pages. It analyses the reasons behind the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism, arguing the case for its attempt to critically evaluate the status of Pakistanis and Muslims in a post- 9/11 world order, particularly within the contemporary discourses on terrorism and capitalism, locating it as a direct impact of the west's passion with power, nuclear warfare and its fatal race for weapons. Shamsie touched upon the sensitive issue of religion where the government imposes Islamic- studies curriculum in the schools in Pakistan, an issue which is related to how people are getting away from Islam as a religion of tolerance and moderation to be pictured as a religion of terrorism. Here she is aiming at matching between secular and religious dimensions. This is clear in what Sajjad said as a response to his son's failure in his Islamic studies exam. The writer expressed this idea via Sajjad when he first heard of his son's failure saying that:

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, p.147)

Pascal Zinck (2010) articulates 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” (p. 45). He believes that “Shamsie critiques US-centred globalization through an assessment of a culture of homogenization which is governed by geopolitics” (Saleem, A.U & Amin, A. 2016, p.72). He further reasons that by making Hiroko the protagonist and the explicator 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” (2010, p. 51). Through the characters of Hiroko and Abdullah: “Shamsie encounters the prevalent western treatise which constructs and deepens the binaries of West versus Non east, USA versus rest of the world and USA versus Islam” (2016, p.72).

Furthermore, 9/11 attacks also led a number of arrests of suspected terrorists, which has been showcased in the arrest of Raza in the opening image of Guantanamo Bay. 9/11 attack got the angry US into taking stop actions, one of them being large scale arrests of suspects which in a way translated into large scale arrests of Muslims. Shamsie also discusses that Islam must be located in

the " Nation", the homeland. In other words, she is a writer who is quite aware that she is addressing a cosmopolitan audience with different cultures and religions. Shamsie believes that it is not possible in the post 9/11 era that Muslims keep themselves away from other cultures and modes of living .This idea is reinforced in Abdullah's observation “Everyone just wants to tell you what they know about Islam, how they know so much more than you do, what do you know, you've just been a Muslim your whole life?” (Shamsie,p.352). “Situating post-9/11 Islamophobia in relation to earlier historical moments, Shamsie further argues that the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan during Zia-ul-Haq’s rule in the 1970s and 1980s, in conjunction with his support of Afghan mujahideen, partly contributes to hostile attitudes towards Islam in the West” (2014, p. 187).

The appearance of the US as a superpower following the Second World War resulted in involvement with other societies, such as Pakistan and Afghanistan; the Americans supported Pakistan's military and armed the Islamic fundamentalists in the Cold War against the Soviets. In addition to strengthening dictatorships and the extension of the fundamentalist terrorism. Here, Shamsie is not only ingenious to the rise and fall of the American foreign policy and that it changes with the interests of the US leadership as well as serving to fulfil the dreams of dominating the entire world. This appears in the two phases of the Afghan- Soviet war: the support given to all jihadists from all over the Islamic countries to fight against the Soviet Union for the sake of the US. The second phase is about how all of them have become targets to the US military in Afghanistan itself as well as in other Muslim and Arab countries. Moreover

the US, together with its allies, forming up the West in its traditional status as opposed to the East, is working hard to distort Islam and ascribe all terrorist acts to this religion. This is intentionally done to create crises where the American interests are served and its role in such places becomes usual. So Shamsie is interested in clarifying the misunderstanding about Islam since Islam goes in line with her ideas about the necessity of not imposing it on others.

It is clear that Shamsie's depiction of Hiroko's character as a liberal, gentle and kind-hearted woman who does not have defined views of others irrespective of their religions or races is entitled to be the representative of the author's own message in the East-West relation, Hiroko is kind to all those she has got to know. Hiroko did her best to adjust herself to the life of Pakistanis for the sake of her son Raza who feels humiliated by lack of racial purity and his mother's foreign customs. For this reason; "She had packed away her dresses and taken to wearing shalwar kameezes at home, though previously they were garments she reserved for funerals and other ceremonies with a religious component" (Shamsie, p.130). This quotation is not only having cultural touch of Pakistani society but also have religious one as we know that our women are bound to wear shalwar kameezes at homes and hijabs out of home. Raza, son of Hiroko, fails in Islamic studies for the third time even though he excels in other fields. The implications of this might suggest the difficulty of grasping the essence of religion. For Raza to prove himself, he pretends to be an Afghan who is fighting the Soviet and he befriends Abdullah, a young Afghan refugee who is fooled into believing that Raza is a Hazara Afghan. This is a clever indication made by

Shamsie to show that those who pretend to be Jihadists defending Islam are not necessarily aware of what the true teachings of Islam are. Shamsie moves from one axis to another world-wide; she highlighted more surprising centres such as Tokyo, Kabul, Delhi, Istanbul and Karachi in which important turning events of the novel took place. Such places are consciously used to show that individuals have nothing to do with politics and labelling. Shamsie tried to show how life of different people from different countries together could be possible even if these people are from countries involved recently in war. For example, Shamsie did not show the religious conflicts that have happened between Muslims and other religions after the Partition. Instead, she draws a consistency between many characters especially Afghan fighting, the Soviets with Hazara like Raza Abdullah relation:

Before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Raza knew from the Pathan school-van driver, (Sohrab Goth) was a village on the outskirts of Karachi, where nomadic Afghans lived in makeshift homes during the winter months when their lands in Afghanistan yielded nothing but barrenness and the perennial nature of Karachi's demands-for labour, for goods-beckoned men from their mountains and plains towards the sea. (Shamsie, p.248)

Sajjad took Harry with him to buy fish. The fisherman on the harbor said to Harry: "People here are from every nation within Pakistan. Baloch, Pathan, Sindhi. Hindu, Sikh even. Everyone. Even an American can come and sell fish here if he wants" (Shamsie, p.160). This shows the collaboration and brotherhood between Islam and other religions. Shamsie gives the positive view of Islam

in this statement. As seen from the above, individuals can easily live in harmony regardless of their ethnicity, religion, country ...etc. It is politics which makes it hard for them to keep living in harmony. For example, America supports the war by: "arms bought by the CIA and transported by the ISI from the Karachi docks to the training camps along the border?" (Shamsie, p.162). Shamsie takes up the new notions of "terrorism" and "nationalism" as they are understood in the postcolonial phase, encouraging her readership to access such notions from different and unfamiliar perspectives. Such notions, with their new meaning have spread worldwide after the 9/11 events, and after the highly circulated US phrase "war against terror". It was, and it is and may be it would be 'a war against Islam'.

Toward the closing chapters of the novel, Shamsie highlights the misunderstanding and misperception that are closely and mainly concerned with the negative stereotypical image about Muslims that how the word 'Muslims' has become synonymous with words like 'violence', 'terrorism' and 'fundamentalism'. Thus, the path of world religious misunderstanding is pictured and displayed in the ten-hour period of social contact between Kim and Abdullah where Kim, being purely American and Abdullah is a simple Afghan with a firm and blind faith in Islam have been on both extremes, representing west-east relations.

Consequently, it can be said that Kim is an example of any American with nationalistic sentiments and patriotic feelings and views, mainly towards Muslims. This picture shows how individual Americans are easily convinced of what their leadership does; they take pride in what their country does against other countries; they believe in the pretexts invented by their leaders;

they do so because, unlike Hiroko, Sajjad, Raza, Abdullah..etc, they are not victims of wars; and for them, lives of others do not count. Kim, being this American individual, though she is highly educated- an engineer- is not protected to a certain amount of bias and prejudice.

Thus, Kim reflects the way America itself shows prejudice against others in general and Islam in particular where it has been always seeking pretexts to get rid of Islam. Despite this fact, and that East and West are still two far separate entities, Shamsie through writing her novel in English, is trying her best to present the real image of Islam as a religion of tolerance and moderation and real Muslims are after all human and social and they are not terrorists. This is clearly shown throughout the novel where Muslim characters were able to show respect and understanding to others and thus, Shamsie believes that coexistence between members of different faiths and nations is possible.

Meatless Days

Just like *Burnt Shadows*, this novel too emphasis the transformation of a freshly emerged nation 'Pakistan', mostly from the era of General Zia-ul Haq, Partition of East and West Pakistan. Religion is used by Suleri to chalk out many hidden cruelties in the society, of a country built over the remains of democracy. The concept and importance of religion is presented by different main characters like Dadi, Papa and Mom, also by minor characters like rickshaw driver and Javed's great grandfather will try to highlight some of the incidents from the novel to explain the religious touch and importance in the text. The incident of the 'Red Fort' is a kind of jest apparently, when at the time of 'maghrib', Sara

being a Muslim woman was not allowed to go inside:

I 'm not a Muslim, "I replied." Then I'll never let you in," he told me smugly, "because I 'm the vice- imam." "Then of course I'm a Muslim!" I screamed back. "My grandfather was a Hajji, and my father is a Hajji _he's probably in there now!" It worked as a threat on him as well as it would have on me, and I strode in, understand. (1989, p. 89)

Why a woman is not allowed in the mosque? Why these double standards in religion? Why you can manipulate the religion according to necessity of situation? Is that God belonging to men more than women? There is no answer of these questions for women the only mere reason is because you are 'Muslim women'. It's just a glimpse of the religious torment, still there is much more to squint. In the chapter "The Right Path; Or, They took the wrong Road" there is a revelation on an Islamic studies teacher frame of mind and his perception. He was very impressed by Shahid and even wrote a book about him called 'The Right Path'. But afterward called him a 'scabble of a fish' because of his mix identity. Sara's words, "old masjid syndrome" is a taunt at the attitude of an old Muslim like her papa. There is a banter between siblings about their father's attitude towards masjid and religion. This syndrome is ubiquitous among old age Muslims. The fabrication of the religion is very much present in the country.

The character of Dadi is very religious in the start of the novel. There is a picture of an old lady in the form of dadi who is cursing 'satan' for everything worse happened in her life whether it is the death of her daughter during childbirth or departure of the youngest son to Switzerland, she blamed 'satan'

for the divorce of his elder son with the 'rightful wife, a cousin'. For her there is no one in the house who can understand God better than her as Sara says "God she loved and she understand him better than anyone (1989, p.3). Religion is kind of a patrimony for us and some characters in 'Meatless Days' are very much into it. In the start of the novel Sara talks about her Dadi:

In the winter I see her alone, painstakingly dragging her straw mat [...].With her go her Quran, a metal basin in which she could wash her hands, and her ridiculously heavy spouted waterpot , that was made of brass. None of us, according to Dadi, were quite pure enough to transport these particular items. (1989, p. 6)

When Dadi was burnt in the kitchen which is 'immolation' according to her, her prayer was compared to addiction by Sara. At the same time predicament in the country is worth noticing, religion was being used by the government for its own gain, in real sense it was Islam's departure from the land of Pakistan. Islam shook Bhutto empire and took the streets but vanished from houses. At home Dadi forgets praying and papa took over religion, 'Papa prayed and fasted and went to pilgrimage and read Quran'. This was a staggering situation for the family, Papa was 'hungering for God' now, as 'General Zulu' was behaving like a custodian of Islam. Religion was a personal matter but now became a public stuff, government was taking care of pupil's religion and it was being forced in the country as 'Shria Law'. There were no followers of religion, only user of religion now. Dadi's weird attitude towards Eid's celebration and sacrificing the big animal is smugness. Sara thinks about Ibrahim's sacrifice and then dadi's, how she likes to

chop the animal and loves to eat it with jubilation. The size of your animal is the proof of your believe in the sacrifice of Ibrahim and you are sacrificing and eating in place of sons. Religion is being utilized to maintain your public status in the society; it's no more for salvation and God. The holy month of Ramzan is also, 'often recollected as the season of perfect meals'. The food is splendid during the 'sehri' as it described:

The food itself designed to keep the penitent sustained from dawn till dusk, was insistent in its richness and intensity, with bread dripping clarified butter, and curried brains, and cumin eggs, and a peculiarly potent vermicelli, soaked overnight in sugar and fatted milk. (1989, p. 33)

The luxurious items of food in 'sehri' and 'iftari' are common in the house and they are source of motivation for the fast among the kids and family, they are especially awake for 'food and talk'. The doubt in Sara's mind about Dadi's intentions for fast are: "She fasted only because she so enjoyed the sehri meal and that mammoth infusion of food at such an extraordinary hour" (1989, p. 33.). The fast is for God not a personal act of partying, but now it is being over enjoyed by the people and 'iftari' time is not less pompous but there is a touch of religion in it: "We start eating dates, of course, in order to mimic Muhammad" (1989, p. 34). The celebration of Ramzan is being manipulated by the Muslims; it was the month of patience, now a month of celebration with yummy food and sehri and 'iftar' parties. The sacred month of Ramzan is converted into the month of worldly celebration. The incident of the taxi driver mocks at the fairness of the Muslim man who stops the taxi for the 'iftari' after handed Sara a bunch of grapes: "[.....] then retired to a

nearby grassy knoll to put, as Muslim will head down and bottoms up in a westerly direction" (1989, p.85). The cynicism of the driver is worth noticing that the meter is on for the sake of Allah or what? Whereas God ordered stop doing business at the time of prayer. The significance of the posture is being criticized by Sara, as she don't get it, the reason of this gesture. She is confused at this gratitude toward God.

The woman in Islamic society is main prey of religious rigidity and it is also evident in this novel. Sara's father left his first wife just to marry again. Her mother was forced to change her name, identity and religion for the sake of this marriage, which was never believed properly by the society. Women of the house are always suppressed by the male authority. The decision maker authority is not in woman's hand, she is just to deliver order and for household chores. There is no proper place in the society. Religion is always used to deteriorate the status of woman in the society. The acceptance of her gender, the authority of her presence is always challenged by man. When a daughter is born, there is an air of shock and dissatisfaction in the house like in the novel 'It's a girl again'. The women in the novel are 'baby pooping machines'. Dadi once told them that the position of a woman is very strong in Islam "And heaven" she grimly added," is the thing Muhammad (peace be upon him) says lies beneath the feet of women!" (1989, p.8).

Every Muslim in the world knows this saying but still they neglect this heaven somehow. Dadi was afraid of his son's temper and mostly walk around in front of his room to check on him. What an irony of the situation! The heaven is passing by your door and you are too busy in your papers that can't attend the heaven on earth and then will struggle for

it in your prayers and pilgrims. Sara's grandfather with 'many wives' is an example of religious play. The religious permission for more than one marriage is well known by man but what about other affairs of religion? [...] wait! My grandfather," I said steadily, "was fifty years old when he married that slip of a thing, my Dadi at sixteen, his second wife" (1989, p. 124). The mysterious death of Ifat and the investigation of her case, the uninterested behaviour of her papa towards her kids, they belong to his Javed (Ifat's husband) according to law and religion. We can mould the religion according to the situation, the incident of Javed's great grandfather told by Ifat: "[...] - a goat was killed for god and then doled out to the village's poor. Later she discovered that the rite was a traditional atonement, performed on the spot where Javed's great grandfather had slain his infant daughter, so aggrieved was he to have a female as a child" (1989, p. 158).

Islam was for the protection of the woman from the killers not to protect them or forgive them via atonement. There is a punishment of death for the killing of innocent in Islam. The narrative depiction of polluted religion in the society is praiseworthy. Suleri talked about many serious issues and problems in our society which are deep rooted and need extermination. Her way of conveying harsh realities is extraordinary

Red Birds

In comparison with *Burnt Shadows* and *Meatless Days*, Muhammad Hanif in *Red Birds* also gives his reader a religious perspective in post war situation, a situation in which minds of people are ambiguous and living under the shadow of uncertainty. "God left this place a long time ago, and I don't harbour any delusions about my own role on this earth but I can imagine what he must have felt.

He had had enough. I have had a bit more than that" (2018, p.26). In these lines, Mutt as a omniscient narrator, describing the misery and hopelessness of this world (camp according to him is his world). There is no hope, that's why no God. So much had happened on this camp and still happening that God was unable to face and left this place. But Mutt has seen more than Him and he is done with it now:

When I was twelve and a half I turned into a proper God's man. I had my hand on his pulse (or whatever God has in place of a pulse). I could pray with such intensity that I'd get proper fever. I would borrow Mother Dear's rosary and speed-read all His names: the creator, the destroyer, the forgiver... Mother Dear would look at me with pride and give me an extra biscuit with my glass of milk as Bro Ali looked at me with disdain. 'Look at you using God's name to get an extra biscuit.' But I was beyond his taunts. (2018, p.38-39)

Momo one of other narrator, a teenage boy having a flashback of his early teen's time, when his faith was so strong and he can feel the mightiness of God. But his faith was being doubted by his brother because God's name is being used ubiquitous for self-gain and that's what he had observed in this world:

Let's say God was kind to me and I was His humble servant, but then Bro Ali didn't come back from the Hangar. I prayed with extra care, appealed to His sense of fairness – O solver of all problems, O revealer of all those who are missing, O the most merciful, please, please, please – and then I said what the hell. No Bro Ali, no God. Simple as that. No deal. (2018, p. 39)

There are others who're still at it, reciting His name..... that He's gonna bring

back their sons one day they're gonna meet Him up there in the sky, then they can ask Him if He had a plan or was just having some fun with his favourite people, the people of the desert. (2018, p. 39)

Above lines referring that Momo's believe in God shattered when Bro Ali didn't return after his prayers. He was praying whole heartedly but all in vein. He is considering others fool who are still praying because he has made up his mind there is no God. But still a pinch of belief in after life for asking God some questions. "As I said, Momo is Momo and he is a genius. I had every intention of sticking by him. If he says there is an enemy army on the other side of the mountain I yelp, yes people, listen up people, there is a huge army on the other side of the mountain. I say it with conviction even when there is no army, not even a single soldier, not even a mountain in sight" (2018, p.52).

In these lines we can see height of Mutt's believe in Momo that he is using the example of our Prophet's life (mountain of 'Saffa'...). There is need of religious reference to prove yourself in life now or may be self-satisfaction. "I remember a half-forgotten fact Arabs have ninety-nine names for their god and one-hundred-eighty-eight names for desert sand. But I can't come up with even one. Were these Arabs whispering their god's name?" (2018, p.58-59). These lines evidently show his so called knowledge about Arab's God and intensive and intricate nature of desert which is a character itself...with many names and attitudes almost unpredictable. "I look up in the sky to see what is troubling this mutt; there is nothing but the mad bloody Arab in the sky being his furious self. And although I have never really seen an Arab, let alone

an Arab god, and I have also never seen anyone in labour....., for some reason I believe that the mutt is going through labour; its agony not caused by heat and homelessness but something more primal. I am about to witness a birth" (2018, p.59-60). In these lines and upcoming paragraph Ellie is sharing his vague information about Arab God, prophets and their stories. He is a representation of western voice about our religion. "[...] those women who wandered into the desert and gave birth to ancient Arab prophets. Women are forced out into the desert so that they can give birth to prophets. That was the history, that was how civilization was born. At least, Arab civilization" (2018, p.59-60). Further, "Making some moolah and thanking our creator is the only ideology that works here" (2018, p.66).

In above mention lines, the religion is only for making Moolah to please God and then keep on thanking God....that's the only religion now. There are no responsibilities towards human beings in the religion now. They are being ignored and left alone...But just pleasing God is not religion. "Sometimes God can manifest himself as a mechanical failure" (2018, p.78). These lines are about universal belief that everything is happening by God's will and same over here may be God is responsible for this for any purpose...will of God. "I was a bit slow to get this at first: eventually I realized that not everybody can see the birds. There are things that I see that others don't because they are not observant like me" (2018, p.82).

As we know Mutt is a narrator who knows way more than a normal person or animal. He is the only one who can see red birds because of his deep observation and deep concentration; others don't have time to ponder upon these things because of their miseries and

carelessness towards nature. “Red birds are real. The reason we don’t see them is because we don’t want to. Because if we see them, we’ll remember. When someone dies in a raid or a shooting or when someone’s throat is slit, their last drop of blood transforms into a tiny red bird and flies away” (2018, p.84). About the birth or making of red birds according to Mutt’s point of view.....These are the people murdered by whites mostly. These are not natural deaths. “They can keep saying, there goes the dog who has had a dog’s life and will die a dog’s death, oh such a miserable dog-eat-dog-eat-dog world” (2018, p.114). In these lines he is talking about his life but this is an indication of life of these people living on camp. Their life is worthless and no one will remember them even they are even worthless now. So no matter what happened to them, nobody cares:

Doctor is doing what he can, but can’t he hurry up? He is one lazy messiah. I know he can’t take the pain away, but can he take the edge off it. He doesn’t want to. He believes in suffering. He is surely some sort of prophet. If you believe in suffering must you inflict pain on others? (2018, p.117)

Attitude of Doctor in these lines is being compared with messiah because he is cut off from the world but irony of the situation is he is not bothered about anyone on camp. He is only a preacher, not doing anything positive for people. “I am dying of hunger but everyone here’s busy with the mutt’s medical emergency” (2018, p.119). Her Ellie is facing the same bitter situation that the Americans did or continuously doing with Muslims. There is a mirroring situation here, which is unbearable to Ellie. “I have a feeling that I am being treated like a refugee. I feel insulted” (2018, p.123). In these lines Ellie is

mourning at being treated like a refugee. What about those who are real refugees? What about their lives? What about their future? He is still concerned about him. “I look out and see that the call for morning prayer has stirred the refugee community, but not everyone is rushing to pray” (2018, p.141). In above lines Ellie can witness breakdown of Muslim believe in God or carelessness of them? May be they are the ones who forget God, It’s not God who forget them in real:

Momo is irritated by her rosary..... I disapprove of these debates about God; Momo says silly things like God is dead, and who gave birth to God in the first place? And if God is everywhere then why isn’t he here? What does he eat? What does he drink? What kind of car does he drive? Is he allowed to go anywhere? Does he also live in a camp that he is allowed to leave but he doesn’t because he knows this is home? Is he needed anywhere else in the world? Is he too busy starving his own children on the other side of the planet? (2018, p.245)

In these lines, Mutt is asking some question from God if there is one. Why these sufferings on earth on us? Why only on us? Why there is difference in treatment? You are being kind to Whites but being cruel to us over here. “Slatter’s voice comes over the megaphone. ‘We will not shoot unless we are shot at. We respect all women, all children and animals too” (2018 , p.269). In this statement, ‘So Called’ caretaker of the world talking about the respect. They don’t know the meaning of this word. They are killing men, women, kids, animals without thinking or realizing for a second and here they are talking about respect.

In consequence of above commentary, the study of Red Birds

revealed that the “author had continued the stereotypical representation of Muslims, their culture, rituals, and custom. The way Hanif has depicted, presented, and distorted the image of Muslims, has validated Said’s (1979) arguments, as stated in the introductory chapter of *Orientalism*, that the knowledge produced about Muslims is mostly political and is used to Orientalize them” (Anjum, M. T., Rehman, S., & Samad, A. 2021, p.53). Hanif, throughout his novel, used all the major characters as his mouthpieces to generalize Islam, Muslims, their culture, and norms. Though he tries to hide behind the abstractness as he did not disclose the location of the Refugee Camp, he certainly makes some assumptions when it comes to Islam. Hanif presented that Major Ellie often observes and comments on the culture and religion of the refugees living in the Refugee Camp. He questions the sanity of a culture where daily activities begin when people are unable to recognize each other faces. Hanif makes it clear that these practices are outdated and do not belong to the modern world. “Construct distinguishing facts between fundamentalists and Muslims: terrorism, violence and fundamentalism have no religion as no spiritual being belief in promoting violence and disturbance. Therefore, it is recommended to the authors to point out this fact and distinguish between believers and non-believers of Islam. It is also recommended for writers not to promote backward portrayals of Muslims. Highlight facts of Muslim contributions to the world. Once the negativity is stopped, it is also recommended to the writers to exhibit the positive contributions made by Muslims to the world. This practice will also assist Muslims in gaining their reputational

association with society other than just being criticized” (2021, p.53).

A Case of Exploding Mangoes

With comparison to *Burnt Shadows*, *Meatless Days* and *Red Birds*, *A case of Exploding Mangoes* also provides multiple perspectives to truth and reality. This novel is primarily set in the backdrop of 1980’s regime of General Muhammad Zia-ul Haq in Pakistan in a very playful ironic style. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* is a self-reflexive narration of Ali Shigri, one of the main characters of the novel. Mohammed Hanif mocks on the different stereotype political and religious ideologies in novel. In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* each second or third line stings as the very title of the novel is an example through which Mohammed Hanif mocks the very serious issue of General Zia’s death with the exploding Mangoes. Mohammed Hanif mingles facts and fiction in a very witty way as he writes ironically about General Zia’s Islamic beliefs and his very so called Islamic decision about Prime Minister Bhutto’s death warrant and says:

He had always consulted the book for guidance and always found the answers he was looking for(...)Then Two years later, between fending off World leader’s Pleas to not to hang Bhutto and signing his death warrant ,Zia has opened the holy book and found this: And the Guilty behold the fire and know that they are about to fall therein, and they find no way of escape thence.(Hanif, p. 26)

Mohammed Hanif focuses one main character of Zia-ul-Haq and through him criticizes the religious fundamentalism hence dismantles the grand-narratives. The main focus of Hanif is Zia-ul- Haq and through his actions the other characters are defined

and criticized such as the way president General Zia – Ul-Haq desire for the pilgrimage of Mecca and at the same very time he feels irritated of the pilgrimage and calls „Haram“ the black compartment and says: “The room was empty. There were no flashes of divine light, no thunder, the walls of the room were black and without a single inscription” (Hanif, p. 157). Mohammed Hanif highlights the Islamic fundamentalism and duality of Zia-Ul-Haq in a very ironic way by describing his stare to the body of the foreign correspondent Joanne Herring as the first lady states:

It seemed that it wasn't Ms Herring interviewing him, but General Zia interrogating her Breasts...General Zia's eyes normally crossed, the right one looking in one direction while the left one wandered away to take in something else, were for once focused in the same direction on the same objects.(Hanif 93).

Hanif deals the historical event of Afghan Soviet war in a very direct way. He exhibits the events where the Americans celebrate a „Kabul – Texas“ party at US ambassador's place and the part of Texas was ignored and only Kabul was the theme of both the food and dress. All US gentry attended the party with pure Afghani turban and shalwar –qameez and some ladies attended with burqa. Hanif draws the events of history in such a direct detailed manner that it becomes difficult for the readers to differentiate between real and imaginative. A Case of Exploding Mangoes highlights the US policies in a very direct manner mainly through the character of us ambassador Arnold Rapheal such as the issue of the teachers of the University of Minnesota who wrote new books about Islam and send them to Afghanistan. Usama Bin Laden a very controversial character of history is

also discussed by Hanif as Usama Bin Laden is one of the guest in Kabul-Texas party at the place of US ambassador Arnold Raphael. “[...] for the first time after we were able to save our country without spilling a single drop of blood, should we not start the meeting with a recitation from the Quran? May Allah guide us in all our endeavours” (2008 pg. 17). We can easily observe General Zia-ul-Haq's double standard politics here. On one hand he destabilizes a democratic government and on other hand he is saying that he did not drop a single drop of blood. Actually, He uses religion for cover his sinful acts. “General Zia took out a slim, magenta-coloured copy of the Quran from his folder, put on his reading glasses and started to recite” (2008, pg. 17). He himself recite the verses of Holy Quran before starting any of his meeting, conference and speech both inside Pakistan and in all over the world. That was the reason due to he calls himself ‘Mujahid of Islam’.

[...]“In Arabic it says 'In the name of Allah'. It doesn't say in the name of God, it doesn't say in the name of gods, it doesn't say in the name of some nameless deity. It says: 'In the name of Allah.'" He left a dramatic pause. "Let me remind my brothers here that the very first thing that a non-Muslim has to say to become a Muslim, the very first article of faith that every believer has to profess is: There is no God but..."Allah," (2008 pg. 17)

In above quoted lines we can analyse that how much Zia was concerned with Islam and it's preaching. Beside this he was actually manipulating both Islam and Muslims. [...] “he was a mullah whose understanding of religion didn't go beyond parroting what he had heard from the next mullah. A mullah without a beard, a mullah in a four-star general's uniform, a mullah with the

instincts of a corrupt tax inspector”(2008 p. 18). Mohammed Hanif in a very playful manner makes fun of the way Islamic decisions are made by General Zia-ul-Haq with the help of Saudi Arabian Religious scholar on one hand and on the other hand he brings the issue of a subalterns thus gives a new perspective to history. In this context, our paper concludes that this research is a panorama of religious upheavals discussed by the four prominent Pakistani Diaspora Anglophone writers. Further, it is a critical commentary which is based on analytical debate about religious monopoly that ultimately causes chaos and production of apocalyptic individualities.

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