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Religious Pluralism and The Remaking of National Unity in Aslam's The Golden Legend

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Abstract
Pakistan is a multiethnic and multifaith nation which was created in the name of Islam. Afterwards, the founders of Pakistan wanted to govern the country on egalitarian basis but the succeeding elites established nationhood on religion and it resulted into asymmetrical relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Instead of building the nation, religious nationalism caused majoritarianism, communalism and violence. In this paper, I have explored how fissures in religious pluralism affect the idea of a unified nation in Nadeem Aslam's novel The Golden Legend (2017). I have used Abdulaziz Sachedina's ideas about religious pluralism and Jürgen Habermas' ideas of postsecularism, religion and citizenship for analysis. The findings have shown that there are power differentials between Muslims and Christians which often infringe the minority's right to life due to religious nationalism as represented by Grace's murder. Asymmetrical rights available to these religious communities cause compartmentalization between them due to which religious pluralism is disrupted and the nation disunited. With no developed sense of normative pluralism, encounters between Muslims and Christians are based on animosity. Lily and Aysha both represent a postnationalist stance which questions religious nationalism in Pakistan. Nargis, a symbol of religious pluralism, is a two spirited person due to her pretended conversion to Islam and makes a postsecular figure. In Pakistan, Christians' right to worship has also been violated and they see themselves antagonistic to the Muslim majority which is not religiously tolerant and this disrupts national unity. Violence by the Pakistani state against religious minorities not only fractures religious pluralism but also causes disunity in the nation. Moreover, the solution to the issues in religious pluralism may be found in Sufi Islam.

Keywords:
Habermas, Human Rights, National Unity, Pakistani Anglophone Fiction, Pluralism, Postnationalism, Postsecular.

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Introduction

Pakistan is a multiethnic and multi-religious country. Historically, the state of Pakistan was achieved by using the political force of Islam but the founding fathers of Pakistan wanted it to be a state in which "the life, property and religion of its subjects are fully protected" (Government of Pakistan,1989, p. 43) and in which belonging to any religion is out of the state business (Government of Pakistan,1989, p. 46). However, the subsequent elites based nationhood on Islam and, consequently, "the autonomy of the civil political sphere and the general question of civil liberties and minority rights" (Rais, 2007, p. 112) had a severe setback. In the constitution of 1973, the phrase of "Islamic Republic" was added and the country was built on the basis of religious nationalism in which there were asymmetrical relations between the Muslim majority and the non-Muslim minorities. Saleem remarks that it is the role of Islam in state nationalism that is the basic cause of Islamization of government (Saleem, 2017, p. 237). It has also been observed that religion can not only promote ingenuity and inspiration but also can direct toward "violence, civil war, partition, majoritarianism, and communalism, especially in the framework of the modern nation-state" (Ratti, 2024, p. 129).The problem lies in the fact that whereas it was expected that Pakistan, being a postcolonial nation, would build a nation and achieve national integration, all of the above steps resulted into religious intolerance and social disintegration.

The study analyses how fissures in religious pluralism subvert a unified nation in Nadeem Aslam's novel *The Golden Legend* (2017). We live in a postsecular age in which religion has more and more role to play in the public sphere of life. The study also lies in postnationalist paradigm as transnational human rights are also involved in the study of religious minorities in Pakistan. Thus, the "cross-cultural discourse" and "moral universalism" (Habermas, 2001, p. 108) of human rights grant them a postnational character. Likewise, to relate postsecularism and the human rights, Okeja notes that 'post' of postsecularism focuses attention on the varying contexts in which theory is formed about the link of religion, modernity and democracy, and the main quality of democracy is that in it human rights are respected (Okeja, 2020, p. 3). Ziauddin Sardar opines that Muslim nationalism of Pakistan had Islamic roots; however, all forms of nationalism had the Western model of political science and nation-state available to follow (Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003, p. 83). Let me reason that the irreducible essentials of all models of the nation-state were Western in nature including that present in Pakistan, hence the applicability of the Western ideals of democracy and human rights.

The situation of the human rights, as regards religious minorities, is worse in Pakistan and asks for peaceful existence of Muslims with adherents of other religions. Pakistan was created as a home for a community which was a minority in the united India, it was hoped that this new majority would take care of minorities because it could relate

to the feelings of minorities but it did not happen. Appadurai connects the violence of minorities at the hands of majorities with what he terms as *anxiety of incompleteness* (Appadurai, 2006, p. 8). According to Appadurai, when majorities see a little gap between their numbers and the national whole with regard to small numbers of minorities which is "a pure and untainted national ethnos"; they are driven into "paroxysms of violence" against these minorities (2006, p. 8). Although he associates such predatory group behaviour with psychology, man needs 'the ethics of identity,' to use Appiah's phrase, in order to live peacefully in this religiously plural world.

On the other hand, in the discourse of philosophy of religion, religious pluralism is the basis of interfaith harmony. John Hick is considered the exponent of the idea of religious pluralism. Taking into account the time and geography of the occurrence of religions, John Hick argues that the faith movements called Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism are not essentially adversaries (Hick, 1993, p. 137). Once their worldwide pattern was established, it remained approximately fixed over a period of time. God's revelations in different forms were comprehended differently by the people of different mentalities and these revelations developed into multidimensional phenomena of world religions. Hick argues that the concept of God in the theological treatises is marked different but "when we turn from abstract theology to the living stuff of worship we meet again and again the overlap and confluence of faiths" (Hick, 1993, p. 141). Therefore, there is much common in the revealed religions and in their mundane spheres, points of convergence between various faiths are to be taken into account.

Nation-space is worthy of intellectual study in the background of Pakistan where a religion has been wielded to develop a specific, reductive and exclusive form of nationalism. In this regard, Bhabha remarks that the nation as "a system of cultural signification" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 1) and as "the representation of social *life"* (1990, p. 2) may be addressed as narration. Bhabha further remarks that the nation-space in terms of national culture generates new sites of meaning and produces "unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 4) in the political arena. Hence, religion may be studied in its situated connection with the nation because in the case of Pakistan, a separate nation-state was achieved in the name of Islam.

Pakistani Anglophone fiction portrays the interfaith relations as well as highlights the affect of religious nationalism in an interventional manner. Most of the Anglophone novels bring forth relations between Muslims and Christians. Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017) is the work selected for the study. It narrates the story of the residents of a fictional city of Zamana in which Christians are living side by side with Muslims especially in the Badami Bagh area. The contention in the study is that at times the interreligious conflicts are so intense that they wedge ruptures in the national unity.

Literature Review

Much has been written about religious pluralism, the postsecular, nationalism and Pakistani Anglophone fiction. The discussion of Islam in connection with religious pluralism discloses that Islam was revealed in the tradition of Judaism and Christianity and it had much in common with these religions, and persisted in the Oneness of God. Coward remarks that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) considered his revelation to be the "continuation and fulfillment" (Coward, 2000, p. 61) of the Christian and Jewish religious traditions. Further, the Quran has so much Judaic content that Jews may be considered "spiritual neighbours" (Coward, 2000, p. 67), however, the Jews of Medina were the worst enemies of Muhammad, hence untrustworthy. Although they were the people of a larger tradition of God's revelation, the Jews were required to pay the *jizya* in the Islamic state of Medina and it was extended to Christians afterwards. On the other hand, Christianity matches with Islam in the dimension of the abrogation called *naskh*. Muslims are against a basic precept of Christianity that they commit *shirk* by considering Jesus as the son of God. Another objection of the Muslim scholars was that many parts of the text of the divine revelation had been forged as well (Coward, 2000, p. 69). Both religious traditions should learn from each other. The study recounts the points of convergence and divergence between Islam and Christianity or Judaism and stresses the need for peaceful coexistence between the people of these religions.

The history of religious pluralism in the subcontinent gives us the examples of both inclusive as well as exclusive tendencies. Akbar S. Ahmed remarks that, historically, the Muslims of India responded to the people of other faiths at the face of a great religion of Hinduism in one of two ways: orthodox and formal, and syncretic and informal (Ahmed, 1986, p. 8). These two positions represented by Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh respectively cast shadows on the development of events in the current Pakistan. A third approach was brought about by Western colonialism. For Ahmed, General Zia and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto stand as successors to Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh respectively. Ahmed suggests that the study of Islam in Pakistan lies somewhere between these two positions and may be studied using swinging pendulum approach.

Nations are best thought of as imagined communities. Anderson defines a nation as "an imagined political community" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). Anderson further suggests that the concept of the nation represents a shift from "the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" to "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006, p.7). Nations appear in a time of history when the followers of various faiths have the consciousness of religious pluralism and parallelism of ontological claims of each faith. It may be observed that his idea of a nation not only represents a shift from religiosity to secularity but also from verticality to horizontality. It may also be noted that interfaith relations and conflicts are also studied along the horizontal plane of national integration.

Nations are not considered natural structures; rather they are taken as social formations. Balibar gives the idea of 'fictive ethnicity' (Balibar, 1991, p. 96) to refer to the community developed by the nation-state. He asserts that the term fiction should not be considered "a pure and simple illusion without historical effects" (Balibar, 1991, p. 96), rather it should be taken as a persona ficta that has institutional effects. No nation has natural ethnic base rather nationalized social formations over a period of time represent nations as if they are natural formations.

The concept of civic nationalism also informs my study in that it focuses the inclusive elements of the nation instead of exclusive ones. It highlights the ideas of patriotic loyalty and civic consciousness (Heywood, 2012, p. 176). According to this version of nationalism, nations may be multi-ethnic and multi-religious but the allegiance to the state is on the basis of equality of citizenship of the people of diverse denominations. One aspect of civic nationalism is legal equality of the citizens which requires a common culture and civic ideology (Smith, 1991, p. 10). This element is related to my study directly.

In Pakistan, the issues of national identity and the status of minorities are discussed inextricably in relation to Islam. Cohen argues that Pakistan national movement had a shared Geopolitical vision that wanted to seek "a protected area where Muslims could live unthreatened lives" (Cohen, 2004, p. 161). So far as the identity of Pakistan is concerned, the Muslim league and the secularly-minded Jinnah wanted Pakistan to be "a state for Muslims, rather than an Islamic state" (Cohen, 2004, p. 161). Cohen remarks that the Muslim league along with its leaders began to Islamize Pakistani state because of its commitment to an Islamic republic and accepted Islam "as an acceptable (if untried) vehicle for nation-building" (Cohen, 2004, p. 167). This Islamic identity was a practical manner of distinguishing the new state from the more famous and larger India.

Likewise, Farzana Shaikh remarks that the question of whether a non-Muslim qualifies as a Pakistani or not is rooted in the foundational ideology of Pakistan, that is, the two-nation theory (Shaikh, 2009, p. 68). In Pakistan, the exclusionary treatment with the non-Muslim minorities is "facilitated by the emphasis on a religious rather than a territorial understanding of the boundaries of the nation" (Shaikh, 2009, p. 68). Many Muslim states have successfully reconciled the political norms derived from Islamic doctrine with the demands of modern egalitarian requirements but the act of converging religion with nationalism has institutionalized discrimination against non-Muslim minorities as is manifest in the case of Pakistan. Religion was used not only for nation-building purposes but also for the marginalization of religious minorities in Pakistan.

Further studies direct their questions on the novels selected for the study. According to Nazir and her colleagues, Aslam appears to be happy with how publishers

endorse his works as "authoritative commentaries on the nation" (Nazir, Shafiq & Rashid, 2022, p. 39) and his so-called brand covers the complete "authentic minority diasporic package" (Nazir et al., 2022, p.39) that Aslam and his collaborators have developed. Although disinterested in the economic benefits of the authorship, he champions against inequality and becomes a voice of those who are on the margins for he himself was marginalized (2022, p. 40). Another landmark characteristic of his works is the treatment of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism (2022, p. 41). He uses the binary of good and bad Muslims: those who are liberal and those who are religious fanatics. The researchers contend that in *The Golden Legend,* "transgressive desire is a marker of secular and 'modern' identity" (Nazir et al., 2022, p. 42) and "fundamentalists in the novel represent a traditional, non-modern religious sensibility" (2022, p. 42). The study indirectly remarks on Aslam's concern for minorities and Islamic fundamentalism and connects them to secularism or religion.

Trauma and empathy have also been explored in Aslam's fiction including *The Golden Legend*. Monaco claims that Aslam's works question the stereotypical 9/11 discursive binaries, especially those which paint Muslims as terrorists (Monaco, 2021, p. 2). Taking into account human vulnerability and empathy for others, Aslam's novels resist stereotypes of otherness and rebut "totalizing claims of the rhetoric of terror" (p. 3). The recurrent images of vulnerability, violence and loss impinge on *The Golden Legend* and *The Blind Man's Garden* and convey an image of present-day Pakistan as a place in which trauma is relentless. Moreover, *The Golden Legend* is replete not only with the images of Muslims being persecuted, but also those of the persecution of Christians at the hands of Muslims. It represents Aslam's empathy for the other and suggests that "cross-cultural empathy in traumatic contexts is more complex that it might appear" (p. 9). Monaco argues that Nargis' hope of sympathy from Massud is an instance of Aslam's favor for empathy (p. 15). Monaco concludes that both novels display the ambivalent approach to violence and fundamentalism which interrogates the idea of Pakistan as a uniform place where only hatred, intolerance and extremism bloom (p. 16). The study highlights some examples of the persecution of Christian minorities but in an oblique way.

Miller argues that in *The Golden Legend*, Aslam explores connectivity by laying stress on geographical and physical reality in an ever-globalizing and globalized world (Miller, 2019, p. 341). This connectivity highlights the resistance of human beings through their act of standing for beauty and love at the face of violence and power. The reading process reflects the "orders of magnitude" (p. 342) ranging from the individual to the worldwide level. The novel diverts readers' attention towards the networks of communities, cultural and personal memory, stories and books. Furthermore, he claims that the agency of the readers and books is revaluated through the reading of the novel and the act of reading found in the novel (p. 343). The book mentioned in the novel, *That They Might Know Each Other,* brings together the thousands of years of world histories "to

question notions of purity and originality, especially among nations and regions" (p. 343). As far as Lily, the Christian character, is concerned; he cannot reach his daughter Helen through any networks except for the imagined words of the story that Helen had once written (p. 346). Hence, the text of the novel and its poetics call for a kinder and better informed mode of life in the world.

Focus of another study is on the potential adoption of *The Golden Legend* as a recruitable narrative that may portray the facts of religious discrimination, or depict the prospects of coexistence (Clements, 2022, p. 856). There is ambivalence in Aslam's oeuvre in that Aslam's powerful Muslim characters and poor Christians are at times portrayed as devilish persecutors and painted as saintly victims. Clements argues that the novel contextualizes and historicizes the experiences of discrimination giving more optimistic insights into peaceful and impartial modes of Christian–Muslim accord (p. 857). It problematizes the West understanding of identities such as savage Muslim, victim Christian and the saviour Western. The novel risks reinforcing fanatic stereotypes for Anglophone audiences which might be recruited to support racist and Islamophobic ideas about Pakistani multicultural society (p. 866). The study zooms in on the dynamics of Muslim-Christian relations and paves the way for a systematic study of interreligious conflicts in a pluralist society that Pakistan is.

Methodology

The framework of the study consists of Abdulaziz Sachedina's idea of religious pluralism and Jürgan Habermas's ideas of the postsecular, consensus and citizenship. Sachedina remarks that nation-states would face interminable violence and radical extremism in terms of a rigid stance of the exclusive truth if there is no acceptance of religious pluralism as a standard of reciprocal acknowledgment among faith communities (Sachedina, 2010, p. 221). In the multicultural and multifaith world of today, pluralism has negative relation with the uniqueness of the religious community and dominance of its religious belief. Furthermore, Sachedina differentiates between two domains of relations: God-man relations are beyond the claim of institutions while man-man relations work on the basis of reciprocity within human institutions (2010, p. 222). There is a secular character of the temporal domain of the man-man relations. There is a historicist tinge to the relations with religious others in that when Muslim empire rose, the tolerant interpretations were given but when Western powers dominated, interpretations of armed resistance against the non-Muslims were given.

Sachedina further argues that religious pluralism enhances inclusiveness due to which any different religious truth claims in a society do not precipitate into full-fledged conflicts (2010, p. 224). He emphasizes that religious pluralism is not the result of modernity in which the world is more interdependent due to technology rather all religious

faith communities required their followers to "search for peaceful ways of dealing with comparable and competing claims of exclusive salvation in other faith traditions" (2010, p. 224). It is also noticeable that in Islamic exegesis, the people of the Book like Christians are to be tolerated in terms of competing truths. The essence of religious pluralism is that the majority community should leave "the public space non-coercive" and recognize other community's right to follow their religion without any hurdle (2010, p. 225). In addition, one main goal of religious pluralism is to decrease the demonization of the religious minorities. It comes with a twin human rights violation that people in the conflict zones show zero respect for adherents of other religions.

There is an air of cultural relativism about religious pluralism and human rights. No universal ideas of pluralism, democracy and human rights may be implemented without taking into account "contextual and communitarian interpretations imposed upon the inclusive language of secular and religious texts" (Sachedina, 2009, p. 4). Such interpretations would plug up the gap between the secular nature of human rights and inseparability of the spiritual and the temporal in a person in Islamic theology.

One thing that causes concern in the secular public order is what Sachedina calls "vertical calling" (Sachedina, 2001, p. 9). It associates a man with a religiously motivated and very intimate responsibility and accountability. However, in the Abrahamic religions, this personal religious commitment garners its horizontal display through a solid social-moral system. Empirically, we also see resurgence of religion in the public space in the post-WWII decades, which has belied the notion of the defeat of religion at the hands of secularism. The secularists see religion, especially Islam, more and more in the negative light due to its involvement in politics and their objections to the role of religion in the public sphere are based on the idea that religion and politics should not be mixed and religion should be neutral on political and social matters and this, in turn, deprives religion of its moral foundation which relates to moral issues of inequality, poverty and harmony.

On the other hand, Habermas remarks that the factors of fundamentalist radicalization, missionary expansion and "political instrumentalization of the potential for violence innate in many of the world religions" (Habermas, 2008, p. 18) have caused the global reassertion of religion. The concept of the post-secular in fact represents a change in consciousness. He argues that "religion is gaining influence not only worldwide but also within national public spheres" (Habermas, 2008, p. 20) where religious institutions are becoming communities of interpretation. Habermas argues that two results of such turn in society are that the Muslim neighbours want their Christian neighbours to face the rivalry of their religion and religious citizens give the shock of public presence of religion to the secular citizens.

Although democratic states allow religious freedom for all religious communities, the decisions of the how-much of the tolerance will be taken on the basis of "deliberative and inclusive procedures of democratic will formation" (Habermas Habermas, 2008, p. 23). Habermas elsewhere remarks that "democratic self-empowerment of citizens … strips the legitimation of political power of its metasocial character, in other words, of the reference to the warrant of a transcendent authority operating beyond society" (Habermas, 2011, p. 21) which implies that legitimization of law does not lie in the ruler rather the people in the civil society. In this case, these citizens consider themselves as the part of the same democratic community and 'the political' has its connection with religion.

For Habermas, what transcends institutionalized power politics and administrative policies is "anarchic use of communicative freedoms" which gives life to "public communication from below" (Habermas, 2011, p. 25). Therefore, the freedom to communicate citizens' ideas in the lifeworld challenges the power of the system. Only through this communication, non-fundamentalist communities can democratically become a "transformative force" (Habermas, 2011, p. 25) in the civil society.

Habermas, while discussing postnationalism, contends that under postnationalist constellation the substance of "[u]niversalist egalitarianism" can give us sustenance (Habermas , 2002, p. 149). It gives birth to the ideals of a collective life of solidarity, freedom, the autonomy of life, democracy and human rights. He contends that in the West, religion underwent modernization which in turn secularized society and effected "a cognitive restructuring of the forms of religious faith" (2002, p. 150). In the modern age, religion adjusts itself to compete with other faiths and truth claims resulting into the insight of the "inevitability of religious tolerance" (p. 151) and pluralism.

These days, communities of faith and religious traditions involve themselves into ethnic or national conflicts. Habermas remarks that even Western scholars of international relations are conscious of the thesis of clash of civilizations whose basis is religious differences (Habermas , 2006, p. 1).While discussing the constitutional sate and citizenship, he clearly asserts that "constitutional freedom of religion is the appropriate political answer to the challenges of religious pluralism" (p. 4). He further asserts that the secular character of the state is a necessary condition for the religious freedom of all.

Habermas' ideas of multicultural citizenship focus the recognition struggle in a democratic state which develops constitution to run its affairs. Here the political power exercised by the state is codified in two ways; the handling of problems and regulation of rights must be able to be comprehended as a full system of rights (Habermas, 1994, p. 108). He contends that the "theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts" (1994, p. 113) which form his identity. For success, the only requirement is persistent actualization of the system of rights for

which movements and struggles have to be made. On the other hand, while discussing the discrepancy between classical liberties and their reformulation in the positive law, he asserts that "the discursively grounded "system of rights" points beyond the constitutional state in the singular toward the globalization of rights … [in] an international, legally administered "cosmopolitan society"" (Habermas, 1996, p. 456).Thus, cosmopolitan citizenship gives rise to global public sphere in which the minority rights are protected.

Analysis

We first interact with the Christian minority character, Helen, in Aslam's *The Golden Legend* when we are told that she is a daughter of Lily and Grace who were illiterate housekeepers in Nargis' home (Aslam, 2017, p. 10). Although Massud and Nargis who are Muslims provided her with quality education, a Muslim killer mercilessly murdered her mother. The power differential in the interfaith relations may be observed through the facts that the killer was awarded only life imprisonment despite having many witnesses to the crime and that he was released even before completing a year of sentence on account of memorizing the holy book (p. 10). The text is silent about any mistake on the deceased Grace's part which may have instigated the murder. Even if we consider the contextual factors of the nation-state of Pakistan having Islamic nationalism and a Muslim majority country, I argue that her right to life has been snatched. Not only the article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also Islamic teaching that whoever killed a man without reason — for punishment of murder or mischief in the land — it is as if he had killed the entire humanity; both have been violated. Similarly, the judge who gave the decision and the lawyer who advocated for Grace were also killed.

The opportunities available to the Muslims and Christians are asymmetrical in *The Golden Legend*. On the geographical level, the area of Badami Bagh where Christian minority lives, has been turned into a ghetto (p. 13). This poorest area is populated by Christians "who worked in the houses of Zamana's Muslims, or cleaned the city's roads or sewers" (p. 13). Habermas remarks that the delivery of human rights is sensitive to unequal social conditions and cultural differences (Habermas, 1994, p. 113). Therefore, there is compartmentalization at work in interfaith relations between Muslims and Christians in that "the Muslims had objected to Christians walking past their homes, and so eventually everything except one lane was walled off" (p. 13). Although the fictional city of Zamana is based on Lahore, it works as a microcosm in which both communities are living like two solitudes that do not give the impression of a unified nation.

I contend that encounters of religious diversity are not always friendly rather they may be based on animosity where a normative sense of religious pluralism has not been developed. In *The Golden Legend*, when Helen is about to give the shopkeeper's boy a glass of Rooh Afza, he tells her that he is a Muslim and "can't accept a drink from [her]

hand" (p. 24). Similarly, on the day of her admission to the school, a teacher had asked her to "justify taking the place of a Muslim" (p. 23). Such interfaith encounters of exclusiveness and discrimination dehumanize the religious other. The instance is that the boy reappears with "a naked ten-inch blade" (p. 25) to see her blood because his mother has told him that "Christians have black blood" (p. 26). The traditional societies which had the divine interpretations of phenomena had 'enchantment' in them and secularism brought disenchantment with it. Let me call this reassertion of religion through the intrusion of radicalization and religious fundamentalism in the post-secular age as the 're-enchantment' of the public sphere.

Even the meta-textual elements in *The Golden Legend* intervene into the issue of entanglements between cultures and fissures between interreligious relations. Aslam mentions a book written by Massud's father, titled as *That They Might Know Each Other,* which dealt with how pilgrimage, wars and other things developed contact among cultures and traced "umbilical connections between places"(p. 34). In that volume, "The Book of Books" mentions an incident in which he states that Thomas Jafferson once bought a copy of the Holy Quran and put his initials on the page that stressed the significance of battling in the way of God (p. 35). Afterwards, John Adams called him an infidel on this reason. I infer from the account that the stereotypes of branding someone a non-believer and thereby excluding them are similar through time and space in opposition to intercultural human rights which have a universal language in which victims may raise their voice against "violence, repression and persecution, against injuries to their human dignity" (Habermas, 2002, p.153).

When the right to worship freely according to one's faith and creed is violated by the adherents of another religious community, the infringement of the inalienable human rights occurs which disrupts a just social order. The state should guarantee the freedom of religion (Sachedina, 2001, p. 10) but in nation-states like Pakistan, religious and political discrimination go together due to asymmetry of interfaith relations under religious nationalism. Lily kept the chain with crucifix "long enough not to be visible above the open neck of his shirts" (p. 41) because it was considered "a provocation by the Muslims" (p. 42). In this way, Lily who is a Christian is afraid to use his religious symbols.

On the basis of their intersectional selves, Muslims and Christians measure the power of each other and see themselves in a relation of antagonism instead of toleration. Babur claims that the company representatives came to one of his houses to erect a tower from which Lily was earning new income and that Helen captured him in the way (p. 47). Helen negates his stance and tells him that the man stopped her and asked. On the other hand, Babur was responsible for not opening a government school in the area for the minority kids but Lily dreamed of setting up a school after earning much money by his reinvestment in the rickshaw business (p. 48). He thinks that the men having "their necks

in excrement in the sewers will soon be driving on the roads" (p. 48). I argue that the there are so many fractures in the interfaith relations that these not only develop strata in the social setup but also defeat the idea of a unified nation. While discussing a multicultural society, Habermas remarks that "the coexistence of forms of life with equal rights means ensuring every citizen the opportunity" (Habermas , 1994, p. 131) means to grow up without suffering discrimination and to "confront this and every other culture" (Habermas , 1994, p. 132). Hence, when the woman asks Lily to be careful because he cannot fight against a tiger that Babur is, his reply is: "Yes, you can. You can if you are a tiger yourself" (p. 49). Such equality of citizens in a democratic state under constitution when negated brings interfaith conflicts to the fore.

There is a secular side to the discussion of *The Golden Legend* as well. Massud and Nargis are shown to be non-religious in such sense. They were "not interested in piety and decency based on reward" (p. 56). For Nargis, religion was a source of "a consolation" (p. 57) to the failures in the worldly sense. The separation of religion and state, restriction of religion to the private domain, disenchantment of the life affairs, the use of reason, and enlightenment ideals of anthropocentrism are some of the salient features of secularism. Although Nargis and Massud are enlightened persons and have great tolerance for the followers of other faiths, the world around them is extremist and religiously fundamentalist. For example, the cleric's daughter could not marry again because her brother-in-law and his militant companions view that "a holy martyr's widow could never remarry" (p. 57). Such militant minds have developed their own community of interpretation and in Islamic theology, as a general rule, a woman whose husband dies due to any reason whatsoever can remarry after observing *iddah* of four months and ten days.

According to Durkheim, the aspects of life may be divided into the sacred and the profane. The sacred is related to the things revered and the profane with the everyday utilitarian aspects of life. According to Sachedina, man-man relations should be considered in the profane sphere of life and should not be carried along the dividing lines of interreligious conflicts. However, in the novel, cleric's mother passes away because she "refused to consult a Western doctor" (p. 58) so that successful treatment should not injure the pride of fellow Muslims. The cleric afterwards implores Nargis "in the name of Islam" (p. 59) not to forgive Massud's killer. He asks her even to ignore the blood money offered to her for forgiveness. The fissures between Muslim-Christian relations are so profound that the cleric sees this accidental murder in the context of the threat posed by the Crusaders to the Muslims. Such thinking does not allow the Muslim citizens of Zamana to take Christian citizens as their fellow compatriots rather the invaders coming from the imperial west. This does away with the idea of national unity.

The post-nationalist stance of Lily is clear from the fact that when he was angry at the humiliations "at the hands of Muslims, he had often felt that if Pakistan were a person

he would kill it" (p. 70). In de Certeau's terms, it is his tactic of resistance against the Muslim majority. He is ready to turn events into opportunities because he wants to turn to his "own ends forces alien to him" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). Lily's national identity is inextricably connected to his equal citizenship with other Pakistani citizens. He was exhausted from "being a non-citizen – a half-citizen at best" (p. 70). For him, the country of Pakistan has no use if he has no citizenship status. The double evidence of the desired extinction of Christians comes from Aysha's brother-in-law who wants to get rid of Christians. He says, "We should drive out these Christians" (p. 90). He adds that he finds it "hard to believe that this is Pakistan" (p. 91) and he objects to being surrounded by Christians.

In our terribly flammable atmosphere, blasphemy has been used as the tool of first and last resort to persecute minorities. A mere accusation of this makes a monstrous other of a member of the religious minority and it goes against the ideals of religious pluralism which, according to Sachedina, aims to decrease the demonization of religious minorities. Hence, when Lily wants to take revenge from Grace's killer, the killer says, "Stay away from me or I'll tell the police that you swore at the Prophet" (p. 76). A religious other is made a demonic other in Pakistan.

While discussing blasphemy laws, Helen comments that they are being misused and that the whole "Christian neighbourhoods have been reduced to ashes by mobs accusing Christians of blasphemy" (p. 114). The idea of a nation as "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006, p. 7) is broken away when Helen says that mob lynching is a function of blasphemy laws and that people "think that they have the support of the state" (p. 116). With the collusion of the state apparatuses, the blasphemy laws develop asymmetry in the interfaith relations by crushing minorities, and national integration is destroyed.

Desacralization of religious symbols of another minority, Hindus, is also presented to bring forth fragmented reality of the Pakistani nation. In *The Golden Legend*, Shakeel and his companions "spread an Indian flag on the ground and cut the cow's throat onto it" (p. 93). It was a loathsome gesture for the sacred animal of the Hindus. According to Sachedina, God-man relations are exclusive relations and they should not be interfered into through human agency and be recognized as the sacred.

I argue that like the Native American figure of berdache, Nargis is a two-spirited person who has obliterated the majority-minority distinction line by her fictitious conversion to Islam. Her other self is a Christian named Margaret. As Derrida's trace ends the purity of a meaning of sign, she has no pure association to any religious community. She is a typical post-secular figure in whom secularism and religion go together. These qualities endow her with inclusivity and pluralism in the religious sense. She was "a

despised Christian in a Muslim land" (p. 99). She wants to garner social status by becoming a Muslim on the surface so that she may be accepted by society at large and Massud in special.

The interfaith relations where Muslims are a minority as is in the West also show a conflictual, intolerant and exclusive nature. Hence the militant Muslim man who has come to Helen's office tells her that he has been to many Western countries. He stresses that "[y]ou have no idea how your beloved secular world treats our fellow Muslims" (p. 114). His wife was spat on for she wore a burqa. They were "treated like scum all across the Western countries, worse than dogs" (p. 114). I contend that his feelings are justified on the basis of his interreligious encounters in the West. While discussing the post9/11 situation, Ahmed reports that "Girls wearing the hijab, or headscarf, were attacked and abused" (Ahmed, 2005, p. 104) and "Arabs and Pakistanis were killed" (Ahmed, 2005, p. 104). The Muslim man in the novel calls Helen "a revolting Godless bastard" (p. 118) due to her secular thought and tells her that "there is only one place where Islam and the modern world can meet – and that's the battlefield" (p. 118). Ahmed also views Islam and the West as two opposing forces which have "mutual incomprehension" (Ahmed, 2005, p. 104) between them. The consequent collapse of communication is the cause of clash between them. All the discussion occurs in the ambit of Islamophobia which is outside the scope of this study. What I argue that the case of interfaith tolerance becomes the saga of clash of fundamentalisms as well as of clash of civilizations.

It may be argued that under the paradigm of postsecularism, the peaceful coexistence of the religious citizens following various faiths and secular citizens is to be sought. In *The Golden Legend*, Get Close Coffeehouse celebrates St Valentine's Day and the city clerics called it "a Western custom that promoted lewdness, debauchery and secularism among Pakistanis" (p. 129). Islamists make two murder attempts on the coffeehouse owner and he died in the second one (p. 131). Santesso rightly claims that the Islamisation of political and civic life has posed legal and technical issues for the emerging democracy of Pakistan (Santesso, 2018, p. 127). Plurality and human rights remain relevant because of Pakistan's long history of engagement with authoritarianism and religious nationalism.

I argue that behind the allegations of blasphemy against Christians, at times, there are covert socioeconomic reasons that may be understood only within the matrix of Marx' class and Weber's status. When the announcement in the mosque is that Lily is having an affair with the cleric's daughter, Babur asks his men to "[b]ring down that phone tower" (p. 139) erected at the back of Lily's house. Babur had earlier claimed that it should have been set up in one of his houses. Babur stopped the men from burning houses of other Christians because he wanted to mint money from other Christians who were his tenants and workers. They had burnt Lily's rickshaw to make him a penniless mite. Similarly, the

police reached there to arrest Helen because she had committed blasphemy by "doubting the existence of djinns" (p. 143). Public space should have been left non-coercive for Christians for the religious pluralism to be possible.

However, religious pluralism at the intrafaith and interfaith level may be observed in the mosques designed by Massud and Nargis on the island. They are mouthpiece of the author, who give readers his message by performing pluralistic actions characterized by what Habermas calls universalistic egalitarianism (Habermas, 2002, p. 149). The mosque has four entrances so that "people belonging to all four sects of Islam would come to worship here" (p. 170). Similarly, four clerics would lead prayers on their turn. There were also the ruins of a church and a Hindu temple there (p. 185). "A mosque, a temple, and a church – standing close to each other" (p. 185) was the original idea. I argue that they have Sachedina's vertical calling which cannot be measured by any profane means and this is religiously motivated sense of responsibility for which they see to God and not the world. However, the acts of clerics developed fissures in the intra-faith harmony by living in "mutual mistrust and resentment" and calling each other "heretics, infidels and innovators" (p. 171). A murder also occurred in the mosque.

It may be noted that the discrimination by the Muslim majority is meted out to the Christian minority mainly through the practices of everyday life. Thus religious pluralism is a 'moment' for philosophy to look into the mechanics of everyday life after having diverted its attention from the bigger ideas. The case in point is the conversion of Margaret into Nargis. Once coincidentally, she has to play the part of a debater in place of a Muslim girl named Nargis in Zamana. In her new Muslim identity, she no more "smelled faintly of sewage" and no one asked her when she would "convert to the only True Religion" (p. 190). However, in her Christian identity of Margaret, she was angry as "the doctor used a different syringe for her than he used for Muslims" (p. 190). The Muslim boys thought that they could waylay her and make coarse remarks about her but not the Muslim girls. Interreligious conflicts are not so much about the system as they are about the practices of the public space. Hence, Nargis considered her conversion "a deception freeing her from the daily aggressions of Muslims" (p. 193). Through such discrimination, verticality of the religious nationalism is enhanced thereby excluding religious minorities from the group we call a nation.

Fractures in religious pluralism may also be observed in the lives of her sister Seraphina and her uncle Solomon. Seraphina, a cashier, was detained by the police along with other employees at the mistaken doubt of defalcation. At night, all others were released except her. Solomon was not told the truth by the police. The next day she reached home and "there were marks on Seraphina's face and neck" and her "hair was disheveled and the Pierre Cardin tunic was torn at the shoulder" (p. 193). Through the symbol of thirty tally marks, it has been suggested that she has probably been raped multiple times. The

hatred again the Christian community is clear from the fact that when Solomon asked to meet station house officer, the policeman slapped him and instantly washed his hand with water from the jug (p. 193). Civic nationalism instead of Islamic nationalism would not have allowed such an animalistic treatment with religious others in an Islamic state.

Further, public use of reason requires a reflexive consciousness to relate itself with other religions in a reasonable way (Habermas, 2011, p. 26). The resultant mutual learning processes found the ethics of citizenship. Thus, when Nargis is thinking of her conversion, we are told that she has worked hard in learning the complexities of Islam but the Muslims themselves "could just shrug if they made a mistake about a fact or ritual, saying they weren't 'that religious'" (p. 251). Nargis was twice angry with a person who said that a non-Muslim can get by successfully in Pakistan and she reasons that "[t]hey didn't know how privileged they were, and being ignorant of privilege was part of that privilege" (p. 251). She has reflexive consciousness when she sees that her rage was in part directed at herself. The point is that Muslims would have, in the pluralistic sense, connected well with Christians if they had deliberated well about their own religion.

Apart from symbolic love between Lily and Aysha, and Imran and Helen to represent religious pluralism, Aslam also regards Sufi Islam as the mainspring of perfect pluralism at the intrafaith as well as interfaith levels. In *The Golden Legend*, Helen is pleased to share with Nargis that her father Lily "will be at the Charagar mausoleum on Thursday evening" (p. 279). It was known to Imran that "Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims of many sects came to him in search of blessing" (p. 279). The political sect of Islam sponsored by Saudi Arabia hated the mausoleum. Hence, Aysha finds no sign of Allah's wrath on Lily's being present at the mausoleum (p. 292) and in a fit of fury she asserts: "Allah, Damn the Saudi royal family … and damn this whole country too" (p. 292). In this way, we can observe her anti-nationalist stance and this consciousness goes against national accord. Where do the rifts lie? When there are bomb blasts at the Charagar mausoleum, Aslam muses that it is precisely "[killing] non-Muslims for not being Muslims … [and killing] Muslims for not being right kind of Muslims" (p. 299). We may see that ruptures in the religious pluralism are in the pattern of layers and disrupt the idea of a unified nation.

Furthermore, the state of Pakistan has been using exclusive violence and discrimination against non-Muslim minorities through its apparatuses like police and intelligence agencies. Aslam has subtly compared Pakistan with Kashmir in that Christians bear the same cruelty at the hands of Pakistani state as Muslims in Kashmir at the hands of Indian state. Even the focus of Habermas' ideas is that people and not the state should decide things for themselves through public use of reason for the democracy to be really effective. In the novel, Major Burhan asks Solomon whereabouts of Nargis and tells him that it is the matter of national significance (p. 321). On the question of trust, Major Burhan

says, "You can trust the fact that I am a patriot … I would do anything for Pakistan" (p. 321). Solomon's reply brings the reality to surface: "For the Pakistani state, perhaps. Not the Pakistani people" (p. 321). Elsewhere, Seraphina was also detained, tortured and raped by the Pakistani police. Hannah Arendt considers violence the opposite of power and remarks that to "substitute violence for power can bring victory, but the price is very high; for it is not only paid by the vanquished, it is also paid by the victor in terms of his own power" (Arendt, 1970, p. 53). Such abuse of state violence against its own people only brings destruction of power itself and the consequent resentment kills the ideas of nationalism as well as patriotism.

Fissures of another kind may be put to action in a religiously pluralist society by apostasy. In *The Golden Legend*, Helen remembers a friend of her father who was a Muslim and converted to Christianity. Now he was "fleeing both the police and his own family" (p. 175) and his father and brothers were hunting for him "in order to kill him" (p. 175). He fled abroad but returned because his asylum application did not proceed well. The worst that happened to him and the humanity was that his son died "poisoned, everyone suspected, for being the child of an apostate" (p. 175). Sachedina remarks that the monotheistic traditions do not allow their members the right to dissension because such dissension, also called apostasy, "is potentially fatal to the collective identity of the faith community and its social cohesiveness" (Sachedina, 2001, p. 75). While discussing the punishment for apostasy, Sachedina contends that the "extent of punishment depends on the civil interpretation of the act by the political and juridical authority" (Sachedina, 2001, p. 100). I would intervene by arguing that though death sentence is awarded to an apostate yet it is the state that may take action and not the common people. Otherwise, social order will be disrupted and the whole nation will resultantly be disunited.

Conclusion

The study aimed to seek answer to how fissures in religious pluralism break a unified nation itself in Nadeem Aslam's novel *The Golden Legend* (2017). It has been found that due to religious nationalism, there are power differentials between Muslims and Christians which often infringe minority's right to life as in the case of Grace's murder. Asymmetrical rights available to these religious communities cause compartmentalization between them due to which religious pluralism is disrupted and the nation is divided into two solitudes. With no developed sense of normative pluralism, encounters between Muslims and Christians are based on animosity as is manifested by the boy whose mother told him that Christians have black blood. Even metatextual elements such as the book of Massud's father also highlight ruptures in religious pluralism. In Pakistan, Christians' right to worship has also been violated and they see themselves in terms of antagonism instead of toleration in connection with Muslim majority and this disrupts national unity. Lily and Aysha both represent a postnationalist stance which questions the nationalism in Pakistan.

Nargis is a two spirited person due to her pretended conversion to Islam. Massud and Nargis represent postsecularism by bringing in secular as well as religious elements to situations. Violence by the Pakistani state against religious minorities not only fractures religious pluralism but also enhances disunity in the nation due to resentment. Nadeem sees the solution to the issues related to religious pluralism and interfaith harmony in Sufi Islam and education. The study has helped us understand the reasons for intolerance, discrimination and exclusion between Muslims and non-Muslim minorities and the consequent disruption in national unity. Further studies may take up the study of secularism or rationality in the novel.

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