

INDIVIDUAL AND SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE IN *THE GOLDEN LEGEND*: AN ANARCHIST STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that Nadeem Aslam, while taking an anarchist position, explicates the incompatibility between anarchism and violence in his latest novel the Golden Legend. His social teachings, articulated through his fiction, reprobate despotism, propose a new libertarian order and suggest means by which it may be attained. Aslam asserts the primacy of non-political values i.e. Individualism, artistic creativity, moral commitments, romanticism, or simply the common pleasures of everyday living. Since he believes in the human values that promise fulfilment, justice and happiness for all individuals and seeks its perpetuation in the reign of love and toleration of multiple ethnicities and religious entities living in Pakistan, he transcends the lines drawn between humanity by various power groups. The novel demonstrates Aslam's uncompromising rejection of rites and rituals imposed by a distorted theocratic perspective that border on new-fascism, and is unaccepting of differences. It further sets to prove that Aslam asserts that brand of anarchism which rests on the principle of non-violence. Through a number of harrowing incidents, drawn from the recent history, he exhibits that violence does not help to challenge the state credo; rather, it drives individuals towards it, thus never ending the vicious cycle. He propagates the view that the individual- not the state or state-defined theocratic rule is sovereign; Aslam's social analysis gives primary precedence to the individual and his personal needs, desires, rather than with society, religion or any other socio-cultural mores, the state or the pattern of history.

Keywords: Anarchism, individual autonomy, new-fascism, radicalism, militarism, sovereignty, state organs.

INTRODUCTION: CUTTING THE GROUND

*I feel that violence in whatever form, never has and probably never will bring constructive results.
(Leo Tolstoy)*

Pakistan is a country with multilingual and multiethnic communities coexisting since the time of its inception, but unfortunately for the last few decades the peaceful coexistence of these multiplicities is being marred. An incessant wave of terrorism and militarism has surged and compromised "unity in diversity" precept. Pakistani Anglophone writers, like Mohsin Hamid, Uzma Aslam, and Nadeem Aslam Khan, try to engage with this problem and dig deep into the political history of Pakistan to find out causes for this prolonged ethno-religious conflict and ways to overcome this malaise. The fictional world, created by them, presents a society where religious sensibilities of people are misused to accrue social and politically motivated interests of elite segments of the country; thus, making the peaceful coexistence an unachievable dream. The dictatorial reign of corrupt generals, and their agenda of a "foreign funded Islamization" (Ifzal et. al 132) to garner politico-economic benefits has been the subject of Nadeem Aslam's literary endeavors. He is profoundly interested in not only the economic deterioration of his homeland but also the hidden vested interest of the political and military leadership of Pakistan for their nefarious motives.

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Pakistan fought a proxy war for the superpower America on the land of Afghanistan in 1970's (Hilali, Ahmad). To benefit America, the Islamic concept of "Jihad" was distorted by the then Pakistani government; this construction of religious covering on a politico-economic motive was done with the help of certain religion-clad political parties. Hence, mindset of Pakistani populace was made to sacrifice their lives for jihad against "godless communists" in Afghanistan. This project was not possible without "Islamization" of Pakistanis. The project of "Islamization" of the nation, denied the cultural, lingual, ethnic and religious diversity of the country and shattered the whole democratic and political fabric of the country. Taking power in his hands, General Zia implemented inhuman doctrines under the guise of Islam and choked the whole nation and its diversity by implementing the laws that denied the rights of those who believed in a different sect or religion. This forced-Islamization pushed not only the other sects towards the margins but also created an atmosphere where demonization of minorities became the norm of the day. This "political maneuvering of Islam by Zia empowered Sunni clergy" (Ifzal et. al, 135) leaving all others at periphery.

This mega historical event was funded by Saudi Arabia and America; with the help of Saudi money and American weapons militant camps were established in various parts of tribal belts of Pakistan adjoining Afghanistan. ISI and CIA conjointly trained more than 1.6 million mujahedeen in over 92 camps in KPK (Hilali, Manzoor Ahmad 103). These billions of US dollars and tons of its latest weaponry made inroads inside Pakistan which became responsible for the existent "Talibanisation" of the country. The conflict ended after nine troubled years giving victory to USA. America's desire of crushing USSR was fulfilled without damaging a single person on America's land. The Taliban who were "manufactured" to send communists to "hell" were no longer needed by USA; hence they were left along with it's most trusted and servile ally Pakistan who was left to fend for itself against growing unrest in the country because of its servile foreign policy. These trained militants, later on, started using the weapons against their own Pakistani nation.

9/11, a landmark in the modern history heralded yet another problem for Pakistan. This time instead of USSR, Usama Bi Laden and Alqaeda were demonized and Pakistan was expected to become a servile ally again and help USA to hunt down Laden; this time General Musharaf offered the unflinching services by putting Pakistan's interest at stake. To help USA in its "War on Terror" Pakistan Army launched anti-terrorist campaign against "Talibans" who were created from its own ribs. USA, using its latest technology, changed the whole country of Afghanistan into a rubble; but it also launched drone attacks in northern belt of Pakistan, thus killing many innocent Pakistani citizens who had nothing to do with this war. All these aggressive and coercive measures, taken by the USA and Pakistan government, only aggravated the hatred of people against the political and military leadership and in response Talibanisation multiplied. These two proxy wars, fought on the land of Pakistan, made irretrievable and irreparable loss to Pakistan. Pakistan was effected "most adversely than any other country in the world" (Ahmad, 2012, 53) as Pakistan became a fostering-house for terrorists.

Aslam's novel *TGL* depicts the horrific consequences of appropriation of religion for personal and political interests of a few people reigning the whole country and jeopardizing the individuals constituting a nation. This meddling damaged the real essence of religion, which, in reality, promotes peace and accommodation. The nation was forced to follow only a few codes of theology that benefitted the power elite at the expense of other individuals who subscribe to a different theocratic position.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Anarchism literally means "without government" and the shared conviction of almost all groups of anarchism is that government, in all its forms, is violent as it produces repression, warfare and wretchedness for its common citizens. A socio-political movement that can be traced to history as old as that of mankind; it came to prominence in the second half of nineteenth century because of its links with the International Socialist movement, with which it shared its commitment to international brotherhood as a social paragon, and solidarity of the proletarians as an inevitable tool in the political struggle. But it rejected Marxism's exclusive stress on the organized working class and its struggle for any movement towards emancipation of the common man; Marxism's approach of sole reliance on worker's protest underestimated the

possibilities of resistance by other social players. This rejection of other social groups entailed a new “class domination” over the masses, hence making proletarians new masters and other groups their slaves. The main focus of anarchism was however, the individual.

Individual and his freedom became the primary concern of Anarchists. One of the pioneers of this movement Michael Bakunin, became the most vociferous advocate of the innumerable “non-citizens, disinherited, wretched and illiterate” who are considered and treated as scum all the world over. Hobbes, though not an anarchist, yet shares many points with anarchism, and thinks freedom the most important element in the growth of a human; as “the external constraints” (Kinch, 78) lethal for an individual. The most significant and fundamental good, that a society provides to a human is the liberation to do what a person likes to do. Hobbes opines that some of the constraints are however necessary to establish peace, they are nevertheless problematic and irritable for the individual and debilitate him in his performance. Hobbes, in his theory of social contract, is not willing to subjugate a person’s interest and well-being to the power seized by the state, but only for the sake of general security and peace. For him, individual interests are far more significant than “any social grouping, political cause, moral ideal or religious faith” (80). The ideas of the divinity of kings, primacy of a nation, sacred motherland, or the cause of war, even a “just war” does not warrant an individual to compromise his/her individuality. Unconditional allegiance or rabid veneration in any form or hue are unpalatable to Hobbes.

Marx Sterner’s *Ego and His Own* postulates that every individual is a standalone universe unto himself and the only thing that matters is his own personal desires, wishes, and predilections. A individual’s sensual existence, his natural tendencies and his will to assert himself are the only factors that sustain an individual. Sterner, however laments that individuals are not given precedence; rather, he is being compromised by society and himself at the altar of innumerable abstractions. The two most powerful barricades around a man’s individuality are the orthodox religion, and the Moloch of the state according to Sterner.

One of the pioneers of Anarchism George Godwin posits, “Society is nothing more than an aggregate of individuals” (Qtd in Staford, 124). He builds his argument on the notion of equality and argues that individuals are different in their physical and mental propensities; hence, their differential existence establishes plurality in a society. He argues that the natural disparity between individuals does not entitle one person or group to subjugate others in any form of bondage. All humans are morally equal so, to sustain justice in any society, people should be considered socially and economically equal. As the shared point of reference for almost all anarchists is the belief that “state is principally a coercive organization”, because its existence is based upon protection of individual’s interest and the maintenance of law and order hence, curbing unruly elements in a society. But for anarchists the very fact that a state has “monopoly of violence” suffices for it being declared evil. The diabolic character of the state has been overemphasized by later anarchists like Tolstoy who declare out rightly “government is violence” (72). For Emma Goldman any government relies on violent symbols for its existence that bespeaks of the violent nature of a government. The symbols like “guillotine, prison, barracks, gun, swords, and handcuffs” (Goldman 42) are the only monuments that a government can show off to the world.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Nadeem Aslam laments at the deplorable condition of his native land in which the citizens of the state, with all hope and happiness worn out, lead a miserable life. It is a critique of a country where the national and international politics have inseeded the sapling of hatred and whole nation is harvesting the violent yield of “radicalism”. *TGL* opens in an imaginary city named as “Zamana” which is inhabited by a Muslim majority and a few houses in the margins of this locale of Badami Bagh are populated by Christian community. The orchard known as Badami Bagh is the property of a wealthy family which constructed a number of hovels to be rented out to Christians. The novel’s main focus is on marginalization, exploitation and victimization of this religious minority at the hands of Muslim majority. The Christians work as sewer workers or manual laborers in the houses of Zamana’s Muslims; their docile and obedient personas speak of their powerless status in the novel. The city of Zamana burgeoned in all directions surrounding and swallowing Badami Bagh and turning it into a ghetto. The ghettoization of Badami Bagh is caused by

another factor that these houses have been enclosed by Muslim's residences from all sides; thus, blocking all the passages to their locality and allowing only one path on account of Muslim's abhorrence at being walked passed their houses, so, "eventually everything except one lane was walled off".

The ominous environment of the novel is detected in the very opening chapters. Through the characters of Massud and Nargis, Aslam criticizes radical Islam and the whole process of its mutation. Massud is dismayed at seeing the floor of one of the shops painted with national flags of various Western countries including USA, Israel, Denmark, and France "for customers to walk on and defile" (Aslam 15). The immensity of the hatred makes him question the way the society is taking. Massud's disgust at this way of expression is sensed by the owner of the shop who feels offended and demands Massud to leave the shop. This radicalism has become a permanent and inseparable part of the society at large where a shopkeeper a few days ago insisted that Massud should inscribe "Jihad is a duty", and "implement sharia law" (Aslam 15).

The radicalism is eroding not only the bigger, national/international issues; rather, it subjects individuals to existential crisis in their private and public domains. Ayesha's brother in law, Shakeel has his forehead marked with "mehrab", openly questions the existence of Christians. His disgust at the very presence of Christian bespeaks of his indoctrination. It is unimaginable to him to see his area of residence surrounded by Christian community. He objects severely at the rites and rituals practiced by the religious minority during their Sunday's congregational occasions. He wants to put an end to "*the noise they make with their church bells on Sunday morning*" (Aslam 91).

Not only the Christians are a source of disgust for him, the Hindu community shares the same fate. Unaccepting of any other version of religion, he wants to play with the sensitivity of Hindu community by cutting the throat of a cow and displaying it at an Indian flag. Not content with that, he wants to make this hatred public by filming and uploading the whole event on internet thus multiplying the already prevalent gusto of hatred and interreligious intolerance. Aslam, by explaining metaphorically through a score of characters, the reason for this hatred surmises that the people inhabiting the war-torn areas of Pakistan do not know any other form of life and possibility of love and beauty. Shakeel is a survivor of "the war on terror" imposed by USA with the confluence of Pakistani government on the people of northern belt of KPK. A few months back, "an unmanned drone- flying above Pakistan's tribal belt but operated remotely from within the USA" (Aslam 23) had killed many members of his family including his mother and his brother. Apart from the casualties, the drone attack had incapacitated Ayesha's son Billu who is on prosthetics for losing his leg. Shakeel himself has lost one eye in the terrible incident. Shakeel's disgust with the state is explained by Aslam as after a few hours of the attack, the neighboring area had been cordoned off by Pakistan military. The survivors of the dead knew that "it was with the collusion and acceptance of Pakistan government and intelligence agencies that such attacks were carried out by the USA" (23). The people of Waziristan knew the price of all this gory endeavor. They lose not only their relatives but also the right to bury their loved ones. Pakistan military reaches the place of incidence and takes control of the whole matter, thus disinheriting the closest relatives of the deceased ones. The burnt and dismembered bodies of the killed relatives are buried by Pakistan military in great haste. The whole matter is covered up by the state media which aired news that it was an explosion in a factory. Being a product/sufferer of "war on terror", Shakeel knows only the politically shaped/distorted and imported form of religion that suit the political/military/theocratic elites but which brought irreparable loss to Pakistani society.

"The land of pure" has become a disgusting place where everyone is pressurized to subscribe to the extremist brand of Islam. Ayesha's father, who is otherwise a calm and compassionate person, is compelled by the discourse of extreme purity; hence, Ayesha realizes that "... this mosque and the book of sins and the pilgrim rosary- had added another layer of perfection" (Aslam 93) to her fast getting old and enfeebled father. The extremist version of Islam micromanages personal lives of Zamana's inhabitants. The pulpit and minaret of the mosque has been taken over by Shakeel and his friends from Waziristan. Since the day of their arrival in the city, they had presided over the loudspeaker, realizing the power of a mosque's loudspeaker and started revealing "the secrets" of inhabitants of Zamana; hence, exposing their amorous interests, personal failings, and corruptions to the city dwellers, thus publicizing their private lives. Aslam

laments at the ignorance of the people who attribute the authoritarian voice with “the voice of Allah” (9) and are easily dismayed by this “new dread”.

The militant Islam, being offered by people like Shakeel, declares a religious war against Christian minority who becomes the worst victim of this unofficially sanctioned extremism. Helen’s mother Grace is killed by a Muslim; hence, scores of witnesses could not testify to the violent event. The confluence of the law enforcement agencies can be discerned from the fact that for many days, the case was not considered worth registration. After a hard struggle of many months, the murderer is “sentenced to life imprisonment”- but the murderer had been released after serving only one year in prison. Grace’s murder and subsequent failure in retribution of justice speaks loud of the failure of the whole institution of judiciary. Grace, being a Christian is not considered a sacred life worth protection, neither is her murder considered an unjust act. The collusion of the state in this ostracism is visible through its organs’ insensitivity towards the immensity of the crime.

Being law-abiding citizens, Nargis and Massud exhibit complete trust in juridical procedures and desire a speedy and meritorious trial of the accused; being a member of affluent economic class, they engage the best possible lawyer to plead the case, but in the “land of pure”, the discourse of purity decides who deserves to get justice. The couple pursuing the case is aware of the futility of all their effort as they are posed against a systemic oppression which is legalized by religious extremism of the majority. The trial is postponed for a number of times, because the files of the case have been lost by the police. Nevertheless; the couple insists on a continued and unfaltering struggle to take the matter to logical conclusion and propose that the case be reconstructed from whatever data is available. Quite in line with their expectation, the judge who passed the ruling is jabbed to death while on his way to office; the lawyer who fought the case successfully is terrorized by numerous motor-cyclists who spray bullets from machine guns on his house forcing him to go in hiding along with his family. Aslam bemoans the social attitudes of a nation that accepts these extremist attitudes unquestioned and gross injustices and let them flourish unhindered. Anyone who raises a dissenting voice is deprived of the right to live.

Goldman postulates that the most violent hence, worth eradication element in any society is the pervasive ignorance and “its power of destruction is the very thing Anarchism is combating” (Goldman 40). It is this ignorance and insensitivity of the society at large that Aslam tries to combat through his anarchist writings. Extremist religion, to anarchists, is the “domination of the human mind” (Goldman 42). Goldman bemoans that distorted religion takes control of thinking capabilities of an individual and consequently mortifies and demeans an individual soul to such an extent that he accepts violence as solution to any problem. Goldman suggests vehemently, “Break your mental fetters... for not until you think and judge for yourself, will you get rid of the dominion of darkness, the great obstacle to all progress” (42).

The “debilitating violence” of an oppressive system pushes another character “Lily Maseh” further away from humanity, individuality, creativity and positivity. He is thirty eight years old Christian who is introduced as “bright-blooded” person who shows unbending moral resistance to authority that humiliated and discriminated against minorities in the country. A born artist, he had designed and constructed the miniatures of two historically significant buildings i.e. the Great Mosque of Cordoba and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. The indisputable fact of his existence is that the outrages he sometimes shows are the response of “goaded and desperate individual to the wrongs from his fellowmen which he feels to be intolerable” (Goldman 65). As a teen-ager, he got furious at the routine humiliations offered to him by the Muslims of Zamana and wished that he could avenge humiliation imposed on Christians because he was exhausted of his “non-citizen” status in a country which grants constitutional rights to minorities but legalize violence against them through specific laws. His preferences, and practices however, got changed as Grace and Helen came in his life; he tried to paint anew his life with beautiful colors given by his new family.

Despite Lily’s loyalties to the country of his birth, life in a fast constricting world is not however easy for him; hence, he makes a conscious effort to conceal his religious affiliations by hiding the crucifix around his neck under his shirt. An openly dangling crucifix could be considered “a provocation” by Muslims. Sharing his past experiences with his daughter that he used to get angry at discrimination and humiliation; but despite all this oppression, he does not “want to break laws, [he] just wanted to obey better ones” (42). Lily represents those talented and ambitious artists who are stymied because the oppressive

culture around them forces them to be “good enough to stand up to their necks in excrement in the sewers”, but who, by the dint of their creative urges insist on being considered citizens in their own right. His active mind weaves new ideas for the welfare of society. He breathes a new vision, a new hope for all those who are subjected to systemic violence. Yearning to bring an end to the oppression he declares openly “I want a school” thus moving farther away from the role imposed by the society.

The individuals living in Zamana are made hostage to another phantom i.e. property. Goldman recognizes, “the only demand that property recognizes is its own gluttonous appetite for greater wealth, because wealth means power; the power to subdue, to crush, to exploit, the power to enslave, to outrage, to degrade” (Goldman 43). The already loaded atmosphere of Zamana suits a landlord Babur who has sabotaged every effort of Christians to open a school in the neighboring area. Lily is the only Christian who owns his own two-roomed house constructed with the support of Massud and Nargis and his house has been elected by the mobile phone company to erect a tower. The agreement between the mobile company and Lily mentions paying an amount of 300,000 annually to Lily as royalty. The uplift of economic status of Lily is unpalatable to Babur who, owns and rents out nine out of ten houses in Badami Bagh. He declares arrogantly, “nine out of ten houses are mine. The tower should be on one of my properties” (47). Lily becomes the fair target for him after the announcement of Lily’s surreptitious meetings with Ayesha. He taunts Lily, “sweeping and cleaning is too lowly a job for you. Mr. Bigshot Rickshaw Driver”. The ostracism of Christian community reminds one of Tolstoy’s objection of the unequal distribution of resources amongst individuals. Tolstoy is wary of a system in which thousands of acres of rich land is owned by a single person who lives an affluent life, while on the other hand millions have destitution incessantly knocking at their doors. Tolstoy denounces a state where “several generations of workmen have been defrauded and are still being defrauded” (Arranging our lives, 308) by the policies of the state which fails to protect basic human rights of its citizens.

Seizing on opportunity and making use of the lethal atmosphere, Babur leads a charged mob forward and incites the crowd to start fire. He declares, “The man defiled the Mosque with his presence” (138). When Nargis tries to intercept, she is advised to stay aside as “this is a matter of the dignity of Islam...no one can stop us from avenging this insult” (39). It is at Babur’s behest that conflagration ensues that kills not less than six Christians in the neighboring area. Gathering ill-informed Muslims, he shouts at them to “bring down that phone tower”. His dictates are abided by several men who are laced with sledgehammers, metal rods and other weapons for nefarious purposes. Lily is referred as “ugly black dog” who must be produced for “mob justice”, otherwise the price for his crime will be paid by the other Christian houses who have nothing to do with this whole episode. Any attempt to preclude conflagration meets deaf ears and crowd busy with two large canisters of petrol begin to pour onto the rickshaw owned by Lily; hence, depriving him of an honorable source of income. Many lives are lost as a result of conflagration in Badami Bagh and Badami Bagh smells of acrid acid for many days.

Helen, a young, energetic, ambitious and creative individual too, is stymied by religious extremity permeating her environment. Adopted and raised by an educated couple Massud and Nargis, Helen becomes editor of Zamana’s current affair’s magazine *Tilla Jogian*. Helen is accustomed to religious discrimination and denigration from her childhood posed in the form of questions, thus exposing her to existential crisis from the very outset of her life. She is pressurized to justify her presence in Zamana, or for that matter in Pakistan. She is advised by all and sundry to move to a “Christian country”. Her school fails to provide a salubrious environment for a young mind; her urge to get knowledge is defied by emphasizing to “justify taking the place of Muslim girl” (Aslam 122) in school.

Helen’s encounter with a young boy is eloquent enough to see through the power of indoctrination. The boy comes to deliver grocery at her place and is inquisitive about “blood color” of Christians. On being offered a drink, he refuse blatantly, “I am a Muslim, I can’t accept a drink from your hand”. Accustomed to such rejecting attitudes, she has accepted them since long as she could not segregate from her existence. She is, however unsettled by the sight of a long drawn knife meant for her legs while she is standing on a ladder. On her inquiry, the boy retorts that he just want to see the color of Christian blood as his mother told him that Christian blood is black. Such disquieting moments are dispelled by Massud, who is considerate towards her and provides emotional support during those bleak stages of her life. Massud

reassures her of her individuality and persuades her to focus on her career. The massive force that she has as an individual must be recognized by her as “there are rocks that shatter into small pieces when struck... and there are rocks that withstand the blows. These are carved and worshipped as gods and goddesses” (Aslam 45).

Goldman, explicates in her book *Anarchism and other Essays* that the extremists should not be blamed for their violent activities; rather, “the system that created these monsters” should be eradicated. She further writes that the blame of homicides should be levelled against all those who “intentionally or by cold indifference” (Goldman 66) strengthen the “social conditions” that compel unfortunate people towards desperation”. Though not justifying, but explaining the reason for marred personalities of extremists and never ending spiral of violence, she posits that the homicidal individuals are wounded people who feel that their fellow human’s misery is caused not by fate but by the arrogant people around them. Goldman believes that some natures in such a plight, if they are least social or the least sensitive, will turn to violence to settle scores with the violent world and will even consider their activities as socially productive and constructive. Such an “outraged and despoiled” (Goldman 66) is the person who enters the magazine office in Zamana and murders in cold blood not less than six officials.

The wounded person in the office of the magazine kills six innocent and unarmed people. An educated and internationally travelled person, he is not accorded a prestigious treatment in the Western world which turns him to extremism. He blames the so-called civilized world for perpetrating cruelty and violence apart from dehumanization and degradation of Muslims travelling abroad. He complains that his family was degraded on various occasions for wearing Muslim identity markers. His personal experiences, when shared with the staff of the magazine, show that the Muslims are treated “worse than dogs” (114) in the western world. He objects that their grievances are not only not addressed; rather, they are blamed of “inventing grievances, that what we have is scars without wounds” (114). To settle scores against non-Muslim world, he insists upon the implementation of “blasphemy law”. The magazine is attacked because the official position of magazine is contrary to extremist position. The tagline of the magazine is that Blasphemous Law exposes the religious minorities to worst atrocities and legalize it. The law does not bound the perpetrators to present any proof; rather, the verdict of any Muslim is enough to make any non-Muslim to uncouth punishment. Because of this blasphemous law many innocent people have been sent behind the bars on account of personal grievances. The editor explains, “*Christian neighborhood has been reduced to ashes by mobs accusing Christians of blasphemy... A Christian couple was thrown into a furnace of a brick kiln by a mob, for blasphemy... people think they have the support of the state, they feel emboldened.* (Aslam116)

Another casualty of extremist wave in Zamana is Ayesha, who is the widowed daughter of theocrat, is in her thirties. The cleric of the mosque tried to arrange second marriage for her, but for Shakeel’s narrow perspective the purity of martyrdom will be compromised by her matrimony. Being the widow of a holy martyr, she could not remarry. Ayesha “had to remain untainted, for her eventual reunion with her husband in paradise” (Aslam, 132). The reign of terror is visible in its most extreme form inside the house of the cleric where he and his daughter live under the shadow of incessant tyranny of Shakeel and his militant friends. Aslam is outraged at the world that denied a person “something so small, so basic”. Sameera Arshad and Ayesha Akram while discussing the character of Ayesha discuss that “it is not an exaggeration to proclaim that “Ayesha is living in a prison, where she has no freedom to go out even if all the windows are boarded off” (57). The deprivation is a constant part of her son Billu’s life too. Thus denied her desire for genuine love, she starts transcending the boundaries between pure and impure love by encouraging Christian Lily in his amorous activities; hence, the loudspeaker of the mosque announces “the sinful, immoral and criminal association with lily messiah, the Christian” (Aslam, 64).

Ayesha’s deceased husband used to be a vocal critic of greedy and ambitious politicians, self-centered and wealthy upper class, arrogant generals and superstitious theocrats who use religion for their vested interests. Eventually, he finds answers in militant Islam. After her marriage he takes her to live in Waziristan; there she discovers his militant activities, the terrifying array of weapons she explores in his belongings for instance, belt-fed machine guns, rifles, rocket-propelled grenades etc. She sees suicide jackets being carried towards a van parked in the courtyard” (84).

Nargis and Massud, a compassionate and highly educated couple, are very decent and calm people. They are not religious in its outward trapping and are not interested in “piety” or “decency” strictly defined by extremist codes. They show however, an unflinching commitment to the cause of humanity irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Modelled on Aslam’s own character, Massud believes that God is simply “another word for consolation”. Nargis, a born Christian, conceals her real religious identity and pretends being a Muslim. Baptized as “Margaret” she changes her name to Nargis at the age of eighteen during her college admission in Zamana. Although, the fake conversion starts with an attempt to evade routine humiliations, but meeting Massud she decides “to carry that deception into her love and eventual marriage with him” (Aslam 61). Since then she lived a dual life founded on a life-threatening pretention.

Nargis constructs a beautiful world for her adopted daughter Helen by providing her the best educational and training facility. But after the murder of Massud, she has to flee towards the island. The forbidden but growing understanding between Imran and Helen rises her rage at cruelty and injustice of the system. A feeling of disdain surges in her for the country the youth is born where the wicked rulers do not “recognize and honor their youth and brightness and purity, their intelligence and abilities” (Aslam, 187). She felt pity for Imran who has been flunked into the cauldron of war, and she pities for Helen who has been molested and barricaded by innumerable bigotries. She feels “a sense of shame, something akin to accusation from them towards her and her generation, for not having constructed a better world to welcome and contain their beauty, to house their spirit” (Aslam, 187).

Aslam portrays another woman Seraphina, who has been compromised at the altar of narrow, constrictive religious ideology. Suffering from systemic oppression, she does not get higher education unlike Nargis, and works in a local jewelry shop to tend to her economic needs. However, on the charge of embezzlement, Seraphina along with six other employees of the store, has been taken into the police custody. Wanting a strong back, she is detained illegally by the local police station. The irregularities of missing money is soon resolved and other detained employees are sent home, but no news of Seraphina is found anywhere. She is brutally beaten, harassed and gang-raped by a number of police officials; this harrowing treatment effects not only her physical health, but her emotional health also. The police claim that implementation of law and maintaining the protection of citizens is the reason for this department; yet, the novel shows that lives of citizens is imperiled because of police. Goldman quite pertinently writes about this department of the state. Her observation about early twentieth century American police seems so pertinent to Pakistani police of twenty first century, “the instrument of law, the police, carry on a reign of terror, making indiscriminate arrests, beating, clubbing, bullying, using the barbarous method of third degree subjecting their unfortunate victims to the foul air of the station house” (Goldman, 92).

Seraphina’s dehumanization and objectification leaves her a “will-less automaton”. Her victimization carries on for many days. When she is eventually set free from the “chamber of horror” (Goldman 92) she loses her dignity and passion for life; her sister observes her bereft of the lively spirit and she lets “herself be manipulated like a doll”(Aslam 193) by her younger sister Margaret. The trauma she undergoes makes her detached and withdrawn from the world around. Seraphina cannot, over the course of a couple of years, wipe off the impact of this tragic incidence and being tired of living “an emaciated, deformed, and will-less, life.... With all her natural inclinations thwarted” sees no possibility of a noble existence and hence commits suicide at the age of twenty three.

Individuals in Zamana are sacrificed at the altar of state also. Aslam denounces a state that has priorities other than its citizens. To expose the servility of Pakistan towards world’s super power, Aslam has interwoven the real historical event of an American citizen Raymond Davis’s ruthless murder with impunity and his subsequent flight from the country in *TGL*. Davis was involved in daylight murder of Pakistanis, but he could not be brought to justice; rather, the military/political leadership struck deals for certain benefits out of the whole matter. Nargis and Massud, are the victims of indiscriminate firing of the fictional character, an American’s gun. The first target of the gun becomes a pillion man who is shot at his stomach and who instantly loses his life, whereas several rounds of the bullets are emptied into the back of another motorcyclist by the American. Aslam comments about the incidence that the “American had fired approximately one hundred bullets during the incident” (107). Apart from the motorcyclists, Massud too is killed while shielding a child. The American seems to be involved into many illegal activities in Pakistan,

as it is later revealed that his mobile phone contains uncountable pictures of Pakistan's military installations, taken illegally and his car contains a false number plate. To round off the whole matter, the death of Massud and other people in the incidence is being linked with "greater and greater things, to the vast sickness of the world ... "the Crusades", and "jihad" (107) by the state representatives.

Aslam's mistrust of Pakistani institutions, including its judiciary and military, is made vivid in *TGL* through Massud's voice who declares that Pakistani institutions "had been eating Pakistani children for decades" (Aslam 31). Nargis, who is the next of kin to Massud is being sandwiched between the religiously adorned new-fascist reign controlling the personal lives of Zamana's populace and Pakistani institutions working to appease USA. Aslam bestows Nargis with anarchist tendencies. Goldman's definition of anarchist fits her character well; endowed with the "spirit of revolt, she is prone to oppose what she does not like"; she investigates whatever perplexes her; criticizes what she thinks is wrong; and innovates using her creative and artistic potential. She is a person who cannot "suppress her desire for freedom" and who possesses an irrepressible spirit of curiosity. Apart from that, she is bestowed with "an ardent love of others", a hugely developed moral sensitivity and a profound sentiment of justice" (Goldman 64). A fictional character Major Burhan not only slaughter justice but also traumatizes Nargis and pressurizes her to publically forgive the American. He breaks into her house a couple of times and expresses no word of sympathy for the murdered or consolation for the relatives of the deceased. Without any waste of time he declares, "The American government has told us that he is a diplomat and therefore has immunity. They insist he must be released" (29). Nargis's desire to see the culprit punished according to Pakistani laws is not honored; rather, it is made fun of. He commands that she must declare her forgiveness for the culprit as "you are the dead man's next of kin, so the forgiveness has to come from you" (31). As for the families of motorcyclists, he disparages them and says, "they too will announce that they have no wish to press charges. You will all appear in court and sign various papers" (31). Seeing the enthusiasm and determination with which the military man approaches Nargis and her family friends exhibits the possibility of high rewards bestowed on a few persons for the safe exit of the murderer from Pakistan. Major Burhan pressurizes her to forget the injustice done to her family because "the world did not end the day [her] husband died, nor did it begin that day. Many older facts and relationships have to be taken into consideration" (Aslam 31).

At repeated refusals, Nargis is beaten terribly and commanded in a voice pregnant with disdain that the US government is offering money for the man to be pardoned. He informs her that each family of the deceased will "receive one million dollars as compensation. As blood money, if you like. We negotiated the deal" (Aslam 63). On her refusal, he releases a snort of derision and declares that these all are tactics to increase the blood money with these theatrics. Nargis, a newly widowed person experiences trauma. Her consolation, the book that she inherited from her father-in-law has been mutilated. Incapacitated and unable to bear the pain, she buries herself "inch by inch on all sides, a kind of self-burial" (Aslam 69) into abnegation. She and her book, torn and mutilated brutally, are the worst victim of the system that gives no preference to the individuals constituting a nation.

Aslam's suspicion of law is shared by many Anarchists, including Tolstoy who is highly suspicious of this institution. Tolstoy declares that legislation is nothing more than slavery. Laws are fabricated by the powerful people to make conditions "profitable for themselves". So explicit violence or the potential peril of violence is crucial for its implementation which, for Tolstoy, is self-evidently a sign of enslavement. Tolstoy believes that laws are constituted in all countries whether despotic or free, "not by the will of all, but by the will of those who have power and therefore always and everywhere are such as are profitable to those who have power" (Tostoy). The very essence of law is violence because to enforce laws "there must be the force that can compel people to obey rules- and that is violence". Tolstoy differentiates the simple violence of people exercised by them against other fellows in a fit of anger; while the violence of the state in the form of laws is "organized violence" used by the people who have power. (The Violence of Law 118).

The oxymoronic nexus between law and justice has been depicted by Aslam in the case of American murderer' treatment in Pakistani courts. He, who, is charged for triple murder, stays in jail in a privileged position and is given a VIP space to stay where no encounter with other prisoners is made and in deference to His Majesty, the guards of his cell do not carry weapons. Owing to his superior status certain concessions

have been earned for him from the prison administration. The food that is given to him is tasted by a team of dogs lest it should be poisoned by some fundamentalist Muslim in prison staff. The American president takes personal interest in this matter as proclaims in a news conference, “our diplomat in Pakistan should be immediately released under the very simple principle of diplomatic immunity” (Aslam, 259). The dictation of USA president is taken with keen faith. Although, it is a difficult task yet Pakistan military achieves it by colluding with the judiciary. It comes up with a solution i.e. by altering the law. The court is shifted from civil to Sharia as “under Sharia Law, a killer could pay the relatives of his victim “blood money” and walk away a free man” (Aslam, 260). The military representative, a general in *TGL*, being the designer of all this drama asserts that “no one would dare object... we’ll have them hauled in court for blasphemy” (Aslam, 260). This all drives Nargis to despair who thinks that her sister has long been dead and the ties with her uncle are severed many decades back, “she has nowhere to go, to punish the world for what it had done to her” (Aslam, 260).

Despite a pervasive violence against individuals by a despotic and tyrant system, Aslam shows a potential for happiness and life in the novel through a metaphoric “island” designed and constructed by the architect couple Massud and Nargis. The “secluded island” turns out to be “the Island of Hope” (Sukheeja 360). The island, where convergence occurs, is architected to have many entrance points; the idea at the root of it is that different ethnicities, sects and religious entities could enter and live in accordance with “unity in diversity”. The maimed and mangled yet precious book, which Nargis inherited from her husband, is a visible marker of the obliteration of knowledge desired by major Burhan, the book is stitched by Nargis, Imran and Helen. The stitching of the marauded pages with “golden thread” entails the resistance against authoritarian forces. Aslam shows that knowledge will grow and prosper despite the squashing force; there will be individuals committed to proliferation of illumination and insight which is the only hope against intolerance and violence.

CONCLUSION

Nadeem Aslam’s novel *TGL* has been analyzed using Anarchist lens in this paper. The research shows, in accordance with Tolstoy and Goldman’s anarchist perspective, that the fictional world of Zamana is pervaded with ruthless systemic violence targeted against a number of individuals; thus dehumanizing them, subjecting them to the worst objectification, and degradation. The individuals who cling to a different ethnic, religious, sectarian group are considered to be the fair target of the power elite. The individuals are left at the mercy of state organs where some powerful people subject them to violence in order to garner political and economic benefits of them. Further, the research proved in accordance with anarchist perspective that neo-fascist tendencies of some theocratic elite distort religious precepts only to impose uniformity over the multifarious ethnic, religious and sectarian communities, thus squashing their diversity and multiplicity. The basic human rights of individuals like Massud, Imran, Shakeel, Lily, Nargis, Ayesha, Helen, and Grace have all been abrogated for some abstraction, thus making individuals insignificant and worth compromise when juxtaposed with ideologies. The research further proves that the desperation and wretchedness can be overcome only if multiple identities and diverse entities are allowed to exist. The accommodation and tolerance depicted metaphorically in the form of “Island” in the novel promises a happy and prosperous future for all to exist.

ABBREVIATIONS

The Golden Legend: TGL

Arranging our Lives: AOL

Government is Violence: GIV

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