

Diasporic Intertextual Musings: The Relevance of Classical Urdu Poetry to Contemporary Pakistani Situation in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*

Qurratulaen Liaqat

Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature
Forman Christian College University, Lahore

&

Amra Raza

Dean of Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature
University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

Anglophone literary works usually refer implicitly or explicitly to the culture, language and literature of authors' native lands. Nadeem Aslam is one such author who makes explicit use of native language and literature in his fiction. Most of his works refer to classical Urdu poetry, phrases and extended adjectives to embellish as well as celebrate the rich legacy of the classical Urdu poetry tradition. Thus, intertextuality is a predominant feature of Aslam's latest novel, *The Golden Legend* (2017). It is not only an intertextual narrative but also an intercultural and inter-linguistic text because it incorporates popular classical Urdu poetry's diction, metaphors and symbols. Aslam employs old poetic expressions and connects them to specific contexts of the characters in his novels. For instance, Urdu expressions like *zamana* and *chaaragar* are of special importance in the narrative structure of the novel. Moreover, the spatial structures of 'garden' and 'Cordoba Mosque' connect this text with classical Urdu literary tradition. Additionally, the English translations of many Urdu verses enrich the implied meanings of this novel. This study conducts a hermeneutic textual analysis of Aslam's novel according to the theoretical frameworks of 'intertextuality' proposed by Julia Kristeva and Gerard Genette. This paper contends that the use of Urdu language and literature is not random but a deliberate narrative technique that demonstrates the relevance of Urdu classical poetry to the contemporary socio-political situation of Pakistan. *The Golden Legend* illustrates the continuing relevance of Urdu classical poetry for present-day Pakistan and forges a new literary tradition of Urdu inspired poetic-prose in the mainstream contemporary Anglophone fiction.

Key Words: *Classical Urdu Poetry, Ghazal, Faiz, Iqbal, Ghalib, Dard.*

Many diaspora writers are inspired by their native land's language, literary themes and culture. Nadeem Aslam's prose is also influenced by his native Urdu's poetic tradition. He often quotes phrases, metaphors, symbols from Urdu poetry which add subtexts to his novels. For example, the South Asian community living in the place

called *Dasht-e-Tanhai* in his text *Maps for the Lost Lovers* (2004) is one such spatial construct that utilizes a phrase from a very popular ghazal by Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1941-1984). In the ghazal by Faiz, *Dasht-e-Tanhai* stands for the desert of loneliness without the 'beloved'. In Aslam's text, *Dasht -e-Tanhai* stands for an isolated piece of land in the heart of England where South Asian immigrants are hankering after their native land. In both cases, there is a barrenness coupled with nostalgia and loneliness.

Similarly, his latest novel, *The Golden Legend* (2017), incorporates multiple images, metaphors and verses from classical Urdu poetic tradition of ghazal and modern Urdu poetry. On close analysis, it becomes obvious that Aslam's references to Urdu poetry in this latest novel have an underlying artistic and semantic purpose. In fact, the author has used references from ghazals to lament the sorry state of rampant global violence, instill hope for a better future, and inspire victimized masses to stand up against contemporary forms of oppressions and violence. In this new novel, classical Urdu poetry has been used because of its relevance to the contemporary situation and showcases the beauty and continued value of Urdu poetry in modern times.

Aslam himself acknowledges the influence of Urdu language and literature on his writing in his interview with Claire Chambers (2009). He accepts that he has "Urdu roots" (p.143) and his works are replete with the "lush imagery of Urdu poetry" (p. 143). He also says in one of his interviews to the editor of *Faber & Faber*:

I do not use the English language in the same way that someone born in the Britain would. The language I use has the 26 letters of the English alphabet, but they seem aware of the presence of the 38 letters of the Urdu's alphabet too. . . . And as with language, so with place: I belong to both England and Pakistan. (Aslam, 2017)

So, the influence of Urdu is an inherent feature of Aslam's oeuvre. In this novel as well, the subtle literary influences contribute to the comprehension and add to the aesthetic appraisal of Aslam's art of fiction.

Many critics have already argued that the prose written by Aslam is poetic. For instance, Chambers (2009) says that Aslam is "Most linguistically adept and poetic of contemporary English Language writers" (p. 134). Sarah Upstone (2010), another international critic of Pakistani Anglophone fiction, states that Aslam's novel, *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993), makes use of "highly lyrical and ornate prose style . . . [and] draws heavily on the Urdu literary tradition in which he was raised" (p. 102). She reiterates that "Aslam shares with Urdu literature a preference for poetic language, highly detailed metaphors and copious use of imagery. . . . [P]rose is filled with the 'abstract nouns' and 'lush adjectives integral to the prevalence of poetry over prose in Urdu culture" (p. 102). In this context, Madeline Clements (2016) also states that Aslam's writing style is influenced by Urdu (p. 91). Furthermore, Peter Childs and James Green (2013) expound that Aslam's prose is "suffused with backward glances, literal and metaphorical, and is replete with Urdu imagery" (p. 103). His texts illustrate "syncretic mixing of genres and forms" and "stylistic fusion" (Childs & Green, 2013, p.98). Muneza Shamsie (2017), renowned writer, writes in her review of *The Golden Legend*

(*TGL*): “Nadeem Aslam’s novels are permeated with a poetic prose that juxtaposes history, literature and art” (*Dawn*, 2017). Thus, it is a documented fact that Aslam’s fiction is inspired by Urdu language and literature and this paper intends to explore the influence of this tradition exclusively on Aslam’s *TGL*. However, no full length study has been conducted specifically regarding the influence of Urdu literary tradition on Aslam’s writing style. This research delves deep into the text and extracts the specific poets and poetic creations which have influenced *TGL*. Furthermore, it unpacks the structure, technique and reasons behind poetic insertion (from Urdu) in his narrative, and attempts to find out the parallels between the diction, themes, and motifs in this narrative and Urdu literary tradition. It further argues that *TGL* has these similarities because the concerns expressed in the literary works of classical Urdu writers are still relevant to contemporary milieu.

This text provides new shades of meaning and relevance to its narrative by incorporating multiple words, themes, and motifs from Urdu literature. It is not possible to understand and appreciate this text’s cultural and linguistic richness without comparing it to classical Urdu poetry which unravels many possible themes embedded in this narrative. Therefore, it is imperative to compare and contrast this novel with Aslam’s literary ancestors in order to fully appreciate the value of a writer, as famous poet and a major literary critic T.S. Eliot argues in his seminal essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919):

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. (p. 5)

Eliot’s observations about the art of literary criticism, if applied on a South Asian writer like Aslam, might yield valuable insights into not only his art of writing but also unpack the continued relevance of the classical South Asian literary masterpieces to contemporary times. Thus, we need to place Aslam’s artistic sensibility among his Urdu literary tradition in order to draw comparisons and contrasts which will eventually highlight his significance in the overall Pakistani literary tradition in contemporary times. The exploration in this paper is significant because it aims to trace the old Urdu classical literary influences on Aslam’s work and provide new standpoints on the interpretation and relevance of old Urdu poetry tradition to contemporary times. At the same time, it will enrich the meanings and associations implicitly or explicitly embedded into the narrative of the text through intercultural and inter-linguistic insertions.

TGL, like other literary texts, is an amalgamation of both native and non-native literary allusions, verses and phrases. Therefore, the premise of intertextuality proposed by Julia Kristeva (1980) is an appropriate theoretical framework to analyze its narrative. She argues in “Word, Dialogue and Novel” (1980) that every text is intertextual because it echoes other texts (pp. 65-66). According to her, texts are not self-contained systems, they are differential and historical configurations, because they are created by the replication and conversion of other textual structures (qtd. In Alfaro,

1996, p. 268). Gerard Genette further adds on to the idea of intertextuality by contributing the terms of “paratext” (epigraphs, titles, and subtitles) features, “metatext” (commentary that traces critical associations of one text with another), “archetext” (multi-genre perspective) and “hypertext” (hypotext and hypertext) meanings and associations of the text (Genette, pp. 10-15). By employing the insights of Kristeva and Genette, we intend to trace the textual absorptions of Urdu classical poetry in *TGL* to develop a cohesive understanding between the thematic concerns of Urdu poems in the past and their connection to this contemporary text.

Most of the early reviews agree that this is a novel about the adverse political, social, religious and peace situation of the country (Feigel, 2016, *The Guardian*; Shamsie, 2017, *Dawn*; Forbes, 2017, *The National*; Garmeson, 2017, *The Financial Times*). However, this study explores the interconnections between these thematic concerns and references to Urdu poetry in this text. *TGL* is divided into eight books. The titles of the books are “The Orchard”, “The Secular World”, “Moscow”, “The Island”, “The Avoided Mirror”, “The Desire Path”, “The Soul and Body of Solomon” and “The Golden Legend”. The main characters of this novel (Nargis, Masud, Lily, Helen, Imran and Ayesha) are inhabitants of a fictional city called *Zamana* in Pakistan. These characters reside in the area of Badami Bagh which has started facing turmoil because the sins of inhabitants are being announced over the loudspeaker of a mosque by some unidentified people (most probably an Islamic militant group). Nargis (previously known as Margret, a Christian) has been pretending to be Muslim since she was fourteen years old, and is married to Massud, a moderate Muslim architect. Nargis had a sister who was brutally raped by policemen and later on committed suicide. Bishop Solomon, uncle of Nargis, leaves Nargis because of her pretense. This bishop is also a heroic character because he shoots himself in front of a judge in order to protest against the blasphemy law. At the very beginning of the novel, Massud is killed by an American spy. Later on, Nargis is persecuted by an ISI agent (Major Burhan) to publicly forgive the American for the murder of her husband. When Nargis refuses, she is threatened and beaten up till she gives in.

Meanwhile, both Lily and Grace work as servants for Nargis. Lily’s wife, Grace, gets murdered by a Muslim. Nargis and Massud consider Lily’s daughter as their surrogate daughter. Another character, Ayesha’s husband, has also been killed in a drone attack in Waziristan and her brother-in-law does not let her re-marry as he thinks that the widow of a martyr should not be allowed to do so. Lily and Ayesha become romantically involved. Their affair is announced on the loudspeaker of the mosque which leads to Christians’ house burnings. Consequently, Lily runs away. Helen, who is at the home of Nargis at the time of mob’s madness, also flees along with Nargis and Imran, another victim of violence from Kashmir. Helen, Nargis and Imran escape and hide on a lonely tear-shaped island which is property of the in-laws of Nargis, while Lily continues running from one place to another. By the end of the novel, Lily is caught and killed in a Police encounter. Imran and Helen cannot be traced after getting caught by the Police and Nargis ultimately forgives the American murderer of her husband. In short, the entire novel is a long rendering of the persecution of human beings on the pretext of religion, politics and gender and their continued resilience in Pakistan and elsewhere.

After narrating the context of this novel, this discussion shifts to the specific intertextual patterns between *TGL* and Urdu poetry in order to illustrate how this novel has made classical Urdu poetry relevant to the socio-political situation of contemporary Pakistan. The novel borrows words and concepts from Urdu classical literature. It also incorporates dominant Urdu literary discourses through allusions, expressions, references, metaphors, citations, quotations and connections. *TGL* has an elegiac ambience akin to the Urdu ghazal tradition as Aslam laments his country's individual and collective tragedies portrayed in this novel. Terrorist bomb blasts, drone attacks, false blasphemy accusations and torching of people's houses are only some of the most prominent tragedies Pakistan is facing in the narrative of *TGL*. Therefore, this text is "a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages..." (Barthes, 1981, p. 39). For example, the fictional city of *zamana* (Aslam, 2017, p. 12) in the novel; the wooden model of Cordoba Mosque (Aslam, 2017, p. 2); *Chaaragar* Mausoleum (Aslam, 2017, p. 297), and naming of the characters provide meaningful insights into the relevance of old Urdu literature with the contemporary Pakistani artistic trends. A detailed analysis of the relevance of aforementioned spatial and thematic concerns will be conducted now.

The first explicit hint to the connection between Urdu poetic tradition and *TGL* is its epigraph taken from an Urdu poet. Therefore, it is an intertextual text because it employs quotations or allusions as a "paratextual" (epigraphs, titles, and subtitles) feature (Genette, pp. 10-15). The epigraph of the novel is taken from Qateel Shifai's poetry. This verse is the crux of the entire novel which is quoted below:

There is no greater denier of God than he,
Dunya mein Qateel is sa munafiq nahi koi
 Who accepts injustice instead of rebelling.
Jo Zulm to Sehta hai Baghawat Nahi karta. (Shifai, n.d., p.105)
 Translated by Aslam in *TGL* for epigraph)

This verse highlights the revolutionary spirit of Urdu poetry which Aslam has transported to his prose in *TGL*. It is not only a hint to the plot of the novel, but it also provides clues to anticipate the type of revolutionary characters which will be part of this narrative. This verse is strongly woven into the text as it deals with the subject of how certain characters are either falsely accused of blasphemy, or are afraid of being accused of blasphemy. According to Genette (1989), an epigraph is a paratextual feature of a text which clarifies and diversifies the message of a text (p. 12). This verse means that a true denier of God is a person who is passive in the face of injustice instead of rebelling. Nargis, the novel's main character, rebels against social norms first by pretending to be a Muslim (Aslam, 2017, p.61) and then by saying no to forgive an American spy for killing her husband (Aslam, 2017, p.64). Similarly, Ayesha, the widowed daughter of a mosque Imam (Aslam, 2017, p. 89), is not allowed to re-marry because her husband was a martyr but she dares to be in a relationship with a Christian widower, Lily. Bishop Solomon in the novel rebels against the repressive judicial and state system and commits suicide in a court room to protest against blasphemy law (Aslam, 2017, p. 327). In fact, Shifai's version of rebellion has been infused in the spirit

of this narrative. Both this text and the verse provide a message to rebel and not to tolerate any kind of injustice inflicted on the pretext of religion, social position and political inclination. The novel inspires a vision of rebellion for freedom from injustice perpetrated by global super powers like USA, religious extremists, and state apparatuses like intelligence agencies and Police. Thus, the epigraph makes the vision of rebellion, propounded by Shifai in his verse, relevant to the contemporary Pakistani milieu and may be extended globally to fight against the oppression.

The prologue of the novel also creates paratextual associations of the novel by referring to a wooden model of Cordoba Mosque (Aslam, 2017, p. 2) which is carved out by Lily, a Christian man. As Kristeva (1980) argues that the “literary word”, is “an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings” (65), this model of Cordoba Mosque creates a dialogue between Allama Iqbal’s famous poem *Cordoba Mosque* and the wooden model in the novel. This model stands as a metaphor for centuries long Muslim-Christian rivalry and it reminds of a very popular text by Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), Pakistan’s national poet. Iqbal is one of the greatest Urdu poets of the twentieth century who has always been praised by both national and international intelligentsia (Ahmed, 1981, p.44; Khastgir, 1991, p.173; Kidwai, 1975, p.71). This poem laments the downfall of golden age of Muslim civilization in Spain and conversion of Cordoba Mosque into a church by Christians. Here, the reference to Cordoba mosque taps into the age old intercultural conflicts between Christians and Muslims along with reiteration of the thematic concerns of classical Urdu poetic tradition.

Cordoba Mosque is an actual place located in Spain and was converted to a cathedral at the time of the *Reconquesta*. After the defeat of Moors in Cordoba in 1236, Cordoba Mosque was one of the few structures which survived. After various overhauls, Cordoba Mosque was renovated into a cathedral. The controversy over Cordoba Mosque continues (*Independent*, 2010) that whether it belongs to the Muslims or Christians. In UNESCO World Heritage site list, it is listed as Cordoba Mosque but the Christian cathedral administrators deny the Muslim past of the architecture (Minder, 2014, *The New York Times*). Therefore, this architectural heritage stands as a global symbol of conflict between Muslim and Christians. Iqbal’s poem *Cordoba Mosque* published in his book *Bal e Jibril* (1935) reiterates the controversial history of this place as well as laments the downfall of Muslim civilizations. Additionally, this poem celebrates the architectural glory of the building of Cordoba mosque and glorifies the Muslim past (Zaidi, *Sharah Bal e Jibril*, pp. 474-483). Moreover, it narrates the grandeur of Muslim civilization and its consequent failure (Iqbal, *Bal e Jibril*, 1935, p.124). Accordingly, Iqbal’s poem, *Cordoba Mosque*, is present in this novel at multiple levels because all texts are “intertextual by default” and “other texts are always present in it, at varying levels and in more or less recognizable forms (Barthes, 1981, p. 39). Just like Iqbal’s poem, firstly, *TGL* mentions the glorious Muslim classical poets and laments the contemporary downfall of Muslims in Pakistan. Secondly, it reiterates a hope for the future of Pakistan as Siddique Javed argues that Iqbal’s poem *Cordoba Mosque* is musing on the philosophy and permanence of art as well as flux of time where Cordoba Mosque has been used both as a symbol of hope and a metaphor for the doom of Muslim civilization (p. 168). Thirdly, like Iqbal’s poem, the novel invites Muslims to revisit their ways and once again work towards the glory of Muslim civilization as Prof.

Fateh Muhammed Malik (2016) asserts that this “poem is expressing Iqbal’s desire for a renaissance among Muslims by putting Islamic moral values into practice” (qtd. in Hayat, *Dawn*, 2018). The mentioning of Cordoba Mosque’s wooden model in the prologue of the novel connects it with all the meanings that Iqbal’s poem refers to. Iqbal praises the Muslim architectural achievement of Cordoba mosque while Aslam quotes the glorious classical Muslim Arabic writers whose books inspired writers in Europe (Aslam, 2017, p. 244 & p. 230). Aslam has incorporated the Muslim culture’s reverence for Cordoba Mosque, its metaphorical association with the decline of Muslim civilization in Iqbal’s poem, and transformed it into a symbol of Muslim/Christian rivalry and a hope for a better future.

In addition to the explicit connections, there are some implicit connections between Aslam’s text and Urdu classical poetry, for example, the name of the first book, *The Orchard*. The possible equivalents of the word ‘orchard’ in Urdu are *Gulshan*, *Gulistaan*, *Chaman* and *baagh*. Orchards and gardens, used as symbols and metaphors, are recurring spatial constructs in Urdu classical poetry and classical ghazal tradition. In this regard, Kristeva (1980) asserts that “each word (text) is an inter section of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read”; and that there are always other words in a word, other texts in a text (p. 66). Therefore, the use of the word ‘Orchard’ by Aslam in this text insinuates intertextual and metatextual affinities between *TGL* and classical Urdu ghazal convention. The setting of the novel is area of *Badami Bagh* (Almond Garden) in the city of *Zamana* (*TGL*, p.12). Garden denotes a place full of greenery, trees, flowers, and birds. However, the naming of the first book as Orchard is ironic because the garden has been cut down and turned into a “ghetto” for the Christian community (*TGL*, p. 13). Later on, this place is burnt to ashes by an angry mob on the pretext of blasphemy. People are being threatened, beaten up, and killed in this garden. Thus, *The Orchard* ironically stands for an ugly place full of cruelty. Mostly, in the classical Urdu ghazal, garden has been used as a metaphor for the gloomy condition of lover’s heart in the absence of the beloved. For instance, a verse by Khwaja Mir Dard (1720-1785), a ‘high quality’ poet (Salil, 2009, p. 41) and one of the chief pillars of the classical Urdu ghazal (Kanda, 1992, p. 42; Ziad, 2005, p. 145) is as follows:

Without you the **garden** seems a mournful place,
*Hamen tou **baagh** tujh bin Khaan-e-maatam nazar aya,*
 Where the dew shed tears, flowers rend their cloaks.
Idhar gul phaarte the jeb, roti thi udhar shabnam. (Dard, Translated by
 Kanda, 1992, p. 55: emphasis added)

In this verse by Dard, there is a clear indication of grief and sadness at the pretext of the absent beloved. In the novel, both Nargis and Lily mourn the murders of their spouses and are desolate and gloomy. Therefore, naming of the first book extends the discourse of the gloominess of lovers in contemporary times. Moreover, Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1941-1984), the rebel poet, uses the ‘garden’ as a metaphor for the nation in collective. Therefore, this text is also mourning the tragic situation of the native land. In this regard, the orchard is a reference to the political situation and a connection with the homeland as in the following verse:

The mournful style that we invented inside the cage.
Ham ne jo tarz-e-fughaan ki hai qafas mein ijaad,
Is Faiz the chosen mode of speech in the orchard.
Faiz ***gulshan*** mein woh tarz-e-bayaan thahri hai. (Translated by
authors, qtd. in Kanda, 1992, p. 319: emphasis added)

Orchard is especially a very favourite word with Faiz that is employed as a metaphor for the collective nation. In the verse, quoted above, Faiz refers to the repercussion of colonization in the politics of his country where staying passive in the face of injustice is expected from masses under tyrannical rulers. Faiz uses the word 'garden' or 'orchard' in terms of the plight of a nation or the suffering of his homeland. The first book of the novel also illustrates the orchard as a metaphor for the nation and homeland that is suffering. The Pakistan portrayed in *TGL* is a mournful place, an orchard destroyed by multiple internal and external forces. Aslam has already used the metaphor of garden for the country of Pakistan in his novel *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013). Therefore, it can be said with conviction that orchard in this novel also stands as a symbol for country. Just like his previous novel, *The Blind Man's Garden*, the country/garden/orchard— all are in dilapidated condition in *TGL*. The characters are suffering at the hands of imperial forces (America), state apparatuses, and religious fundamentalism. The external forces such as American spies kill Nargis' husband in an American drone attack in Waziristan. Ayesha's child is also maimed due to a missile strike launched by the USA, and Nargis is forced to forgive the American murderer of her husband because America wants it. Secondly, state apparatuses like Police and CIA are threatening people brutally. Policemen rape Seraphina, a Christian girl and sister of Nargis and, consequently, she loses her mind and commits suicide. Moreover, Police takes a sadistic pleasure in staging a police encounter. Later on, many policemen shoot Lily, a Christian, simultaneously because everyone wanted to take the privilege to shoot a falsely accused blasphemer and get a ticket to heaven (*TGL*, p. 349). Moreover, the CIA agent threatens Nargis to forgive the murderer of her husband and beats her up (*TGL*, pp. 33, 63). Thirdly, religious fundamentalists have made people's lives hell. Ayesha's brother-in-law does not let her re-marry because he believes that the widow of a martyr (a man died in drone strike) should not marry again (*TGL*, p. 57). Ayesha's father is a Mosque Imam of *Badami Bagh* area and his mosque is taken over by these religious fundamentalists that announce people's minor and major sins over loud speaker and pronounce judgments on them. Religious extremists organize suicide blasts at *Charagar* Mausoleum and the perpetrators are glorified as "true heroes of Islam" (*TGL*, p. 364). Thus, the first book of the novel has been named as *The Orchard* not to connect it to and blissful place but a mournful place, a metaphor for Pakistan. The garden, on one level, has been associated with the melancholic garden portrayed in the Urdu ghazal tradition where characters like Nargis and Lily are mourning the deaths of their beloveds. Additionally, in the tradition of Faiz's poetry, it laments the damage of the homeland caused by the passivity of masses in the face of injustice. In this sense, name of the first book of *TGL*, *The Orchard*, is a potential link to trace the continued relevance of Urdu classical poetry with the woeful condition of contemporary Pakistani society.

Another very obvious allusion to Urdu language and literature is the selection of the name “*Zamana*”—“a fictional place” (Shamsie, *Dawn*, 2017) as the setting of this novel. But this is more than a city; it is a symbolic spatial structure which invokes the cruelty of *zamana* reiterated in the classical Urdu ghazal tradition. *Zamana* means ‘the contemporary era’ as Aslam (2017) states in his interview, “My novel is set in a fictional city called *Zamana* – which in Persian and Urdu means ‘the world and all it contains’; or ‘the age’; the zeitgeist. *The Golden Legend* is the story of our times, of the encounter between worlds and cultures” (*Faber & Faber*). Thus, the word ‘*zamana*’ stands for the flow of time and it is contemporary time as per the narrative of the novel. Moreover, the author also associates the word with the Punjabi variant of *zamana*; which is “*vela*” (Aslam, 2017, p.73) as the city is shown to be situated by the “*vela river*” (Aslam, 2017, p. 72) and reminds of Urdu classical novel by Qurratulain Hayder’s *River of Fire* (1959) that uses the metaphor of river for the passing of time (Amarakeerthi, 2003, p.27, Taj, 2009, p.95). *Zamana* city and “*vela river*” both refer to the contemporary era and flow of time and both of these have gloomy connotations in classical Urdu poetry and Urdu novel. There are multiple implications of the word *zamana* in the Urdu poetic literary tradition, that have significant connections with the use of word *zamana* in *TGL*. In fact, Aslam’s “[w]riting is an inevitable dialogue with the past” (Williams, 2015, p.175) since *Zamana* incorporates numerous discourses from Urdu ghazal tradition. For instance, Mirza Ghalib (1797- 1869), “the greatest Urdu poet and one of the greatest in any language” (Salil, 2009, p.46), portrays *zamana* as an antagonist force working viciously against human existence as follows:

Why, O Lord, doth the **world** me obliterate?
Yarab! zamana mujh ko mitata hai kis liye
 I am not a letter too many on the earthly state.
Lauh-e-jahan pe harf-e-mukarrar nahi hun main. (Ghalib, Translated by Kanda, 1992, p. 133; emphasis added)

In the verse quoted above, the cruelty of flow of time has been lamented. Similarly, in *TGL*, the flow of time makes main characters suffer and obliterates innocent human beings like Lily, Lily’s wife, Bishop Solomon, Seraphina and Nargis’ husband. Similarly, Mir Dard reiterates the atrocious nature of *Zamana* and human resilience in the face of hard realities of life:

Temperate it never grew, the temper of this **world**.
Aya na aitdaal par hargiz Mazaaj-e-dahar,
 Though I absorbed within, the hot and cold of times.
Main garche garm-o-sard-e- zamana samo gaya. (Dard, Translated by Kanda, 1992, p. 51; emphasis added)

Dard also depicts *zamana* as a hostile power against which human beings are standing tall. This verse is a universal statement on the harsh realities of the real world and the resilience of human beings in the face of tough times, the way Nargis courageously faces all cruelties of political, social and religious forces (As mentioned earlier). Therefore, both verses by Dard and Ghalib portray *zamana* as a cruel force; the way *zamana* city is a cruel force for its inhabitants. Aslam here reiterates cruelty of

contemporary times (*zamana*) for both individual characters in the novel and the collective religious, social and political tragedies which Pakistan has to face.

Perhaps, the most striking text related to the word *zamana* by any literary figures is an entire poem *Zamana* written by the most celebrated Urdu poet Allam Iqbal in his book *Baal e Jibreel* (1935) in which *zamana* refers to 'time' personified as a character who informs the readers: "New tidings slowly come drop by drop from my pitcher gurgling of **time**'s new sights, .../Meri Soorahi Se Qatra Qatra Naye Hawadis Tapak Rahe Hain ..." (Iqbal, *Baal e Jibril*, 1935, p.143 Translated by Authors). Here, time has been associated with the metaphor of a pitcher from which new incidents are being poured drop by drop. It is a beautiful metaphor for the continuation of ongoing time. Time exclaims in the above excerpt that new incidents are happening that are giving unique insights into the workings of time (Zaidi, *Sharah Baal e Jibril*, 532-533). For classical ghazal writers, *zamana* or flow of time is a hostile force but in the poetry of Iqbal, *zamana* is either a driving force for change or it is a stage where change is taking place. *TGL* also draws readers' attention that we need to get insights from the events unfolding in this novel because time unravels multiple incidents in order to teach lesson to the onlookers. By the end of the novel, Aslam writes that Lily is *zamana* and *vela* (*TGL*, p.353). This statement by the author might be inferred in two ways. First of all, the character of Lily stands as a metonymy for multiple atrocities that individuals have to go through in contemporary times. Secondly, *zamana*, in Iqbal's terminology is revealing its incidents through the character of Lily so that valuable lessons might be learnt for creating a better world for minorities and individuals in Pakistan. Moreover, the character of Lily is a foil to the main character, Nargis. Both characters are named after flowers, they lose their spouses and do not get justice and pretend to be Muslim at various points, whereas, Nargis continues with her pretense as a Muslim but Lily could not. Lily has been used as a male double for the character of Nargis and his character portrays the cruel possibilities if religious pretense of Nargis could ever become public. Thus, Nargis and Lily are two sides of the same coin. In this sense, if Lily is *zamana*, whatever happens to Nargis is also the flow of time which should be observed keenly. Aslam is often criticized for portraying Muslim communities as religious extremists and the tragic case of Lily and Nargis, in this novel, might be exaggerated but the author is overstressing to magnify and shake Pakistani masses out of their insensitivity and slumber, so that the religious discrimination might be avoided in future. So, the use of word *Zamana* for the city's name, as well as for a character, denotes the prevailing gloomy mood of the novel and laments individual and collective tragic situations in Pakistan. Moreover, it invites to learn lessons from the ongoing flow of *zamana*, the way Iqbal wants his readers to learn from observing the happenings around them and get insights to resolve the difficult situations. *TGL* offers its readers a chance to observe the passage of time in this fictional world and learn lessons from them for their real lives. Hence, the word *zamana* amalgamates multiple cultural and poetic meanings of the word 'time' which makes *TGL* an intercultural, inter-generational (because the word has the same hostile connotation in multiple poetic expressions of the subcontinent from past till present), and inter-linguistic text that adds the Urdu word *zamana* into an English novel.

In addition to mourning for the hopeless Pakistani situation, the novel also infuses hope for a revolution that can liberate the weak and downtrodden characters.

It does not only lament the tragic situation of its characters but also extends a vision of a flickering hope for a revolution and is “constructed as a mosaic of quotations; by “the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1981, p. 66). For example, Aslam quotes a very famous piece of writing by Faiz:

Let the breeze pour colors
Into the waiting blossoms.
Oh love, now return,
So the promised springtime may at last begin.
(Aslam, 2017, p. 247)

This is a reference to the famous ghazal by Faiz Ahmed Faiz *Gulon mein rang bhare, baad-e-naubahaar chale/ Chale bhi aao ki gulshan ka karobaar chale*, which he wrote on 29th January, 1954, in Montgomery Jail. In this ghazal, the poet has portrayed an eager lover waiting for the ‘beloved’ who will bring the promised spring time, means happiness. Faiz is considered as one of the most remarkable poets in modern Urdu poetry and a champion of Human Rights as he has been active against injustice (Ahmed, 1984, p. 2071; Coppola, 1990, p.126; Lall, 1975, p.68) and dictatorship in Pakistan. He wrote extensively to raise the morale of the weak and downtrodden and, therefore, he is also known as the poet of the victimized. At the same time, he champions human resilience in the face of injustice, cruelty and brutality (Ali, 1990, p.132). According to a Pakistani poet and literary critic Agha Shahid Ali (1990), in the poetry of Faiz, the beloved is an extended metaphor that means revolution and “waiting for the Revolution can be as agonizing and intoxicating as waiting for one’s lover” (p. 132). The characters in *TGL* are listening to this sad ghazal in order to alleviate their pain and waiting for better times to come. Aslam seems to follow the concerns already expressed in the poetry of Faiz and he reiterates the cause for the support of the downtrodden. This ghazal, at that point in the novel- where Imran, Helen and Nargis are in hiding at the island- becomes an outcry of the characters for justice and revolution that can make life easier for the weak and the oppressed. This verse at this point of time in the narrative gives voice to the aspirations of the oppressed who hope for the dawn of a new era in Pakistan in which they can get their religious, political, social, and legal rights. Flowers and spring are always associated with renewal, rebirth, colourfulness and cheerfulness. Therefore, the wait for the blossoms and springtime here symbolically stands for the aspiration for the emergence of a revolution. The word spring means a season in both English and Urdu equivalents. But author taps into the Urdu poetry’s revolutionary spirit associated with the term and adds on to the richness and multiplicity of the connotations linked with it. The symbolic insertion of spring, from Faiz’s poetry, has been transported as metaphor for an eagerly awaited revolution in contemporary Pakistan. Henceforth, this couplet from Faiz, quoted here is a call for a rebellion against prevailing injustice in Pakistan and a need to establish an egalitarian society where everyone gets legal, moral, religious, and political rights.

Along with the hope for revolution, the author also pays tribute to the resilient characters in *TGL* as well as the valor of the citizens of Pakistan by quoting translation of Urdu verses in this novel that pay homage to the gallantry of human beings in the

face of suffering. For example, he quotes Mir Dard (1720-1785), the classical Urdu romantic poet:

Who lies buried at the horizon
 With his heart still on fire?
 Each dawn a flame sets the sky ablaze. (*TGL*, p. 249)

The verse quoted above speaks of courage of Lily, Nargis, Helen, Imran and Ayesha in the face of misery. It sounds like celebration of martyrs on their way to death. Forbes, a significant international literary critic, expounds that this novel is a story of “persecution and resilience” (*The National*, 2017). Similarly, Laura Garmeson, a leading art reviewer, reiterates that this novel is a “paean to human resilience” (*Financial Times*, 2017). In fact, this verse foreshadows the tragic death of Lily and heroic stance of Bishop Solomon against blasphemy law. It gives a hope that even though characters like Lily and Bishop Solomon die in their search for truth and justice, but every dawn brings new hope for the causes of frail and oppressed people. These verses in the text not only comment on the misery of the characters in the novel, but they also herald a hope for the better future of Pakistan. This verse from Dard amplifies Aslam’s novel that all the innocent characters, who die in this text, due to terrorist attacks, drone attacks, and religious discrimination are not dying in vain, their blood will bring revolution. The direct quotation of this couplet by Dard in *TGL* is an explicit example of the amalgamation of Urdu literary tradition with the contemporary injustice in Pakistani milieu and a hope for a better future because of the sacrifices of all these characters in the novel.

Another overt association of *TGL* with classical Urdu poets might be traced through naming of a mausoleum as *chaaragar* in this text. This word has metatextual connection with classical Urdu poetry if analyzed through the commentary on the prominent aspects of the text (Gennette, p. 12). *Chaaragar* Mausoleum, in this text, is described as a place built in the reverence of a Sufi saint called *Chaaragar*, who was “fabled and loved” and “Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims of many sects came to him in search of blessings. Females, males and hijras...” (p. 279). In the tradition of Urdu classical ghazal, *chaaragar* is another very popular word which means ‘healer’ and connotes spiritual healer. The protagonists of Urdu ghazal tradition are always looking for a *chaaragar*— a healer to alleviate the pain of love. It is significant to notice that in spite of all the invocation and mentioning of the presence of a *Chaaragar* (healer) in Urdu poetic tradition, it is very seldom that *chaaragar* heals the souls in pain. For example, this verse by Allama Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan:

O pain of parting, potion of death is yet untried,
Maut ka nuskha abhi baaqi hai ai dard-e-firaq,
 Crazy is the **physician** who thinks I have no cure.
Chaaragar *diwana hai mein la dawa kyun kar hua.* (Iqbal,
 Translated by Kanda, 1992, p. 223: emphasis added)

The verse has a desolate tone where the poet is asking his healer to prescribe death as a cure, thus, hinting at the insufficiency or inefficiency of the healer in both romantic

and political terms. The word *chaaragar* foreshadows the impending doom of all the characters visiting that mausoleum in the text. Similarly, another verse from Ghalib also uses the word *chaaragar* to connote the indifference of healer towards a soul in pain:

If you can't see my scalded heart,
Daaghe-e-dil gar nazar nahi aata,
Can't you, **O healer**, smell the burn?
*Bu bhi ai **Chaaragar** nahi aati?* (Ghalib, Translated by Kanda, 1992,
p. 153: emphasis added)

In this excerpt from Ghalib, healer is apathetic to the pain of the suffering patient. On the one hand, *Chaaragar* signifies beloved as a healer who is not paying attention, whereas, on the other hand, the term suggests need for the collective healing of a nation by a political or religious healer, as Faiz gives this word a political connotation in the verses given below:

The **physicians** were averse to handling my case,
*Har **Chaaragar** ko chaaragari se gurez tha*
Otherwise my malady wasn't beyond care.
Warna hamen jo dukh the bohat ladawa na the. (Faiz, Translated by
Kanda, 1992, p.321: emphasis added)

This specific excerpt from Faiz implies a political meaning that the situation of a country is not beyond repair if handled with honesty by the leaders of the nation. The verse can be interpreted in both romantic and political terms. In all the verses quoted above by Iqbal, Faiz, and Ghalib, *chaaragar* (healer) is either unaware of the pain of the lover or unwilling to heal the pain. Following the Urdu literary tradition of both romantic and political connotations of this word, the *chaaragar* has been unable to perform healing in this novel as well. The term *chaaragar* actually taps into the long tradition of spiritual healers or Sufi saints prevalent in the Subcontinent and develops an intercultural and inter-linguistic connection to comment on the incurable diseases of Pakistan. The spatial construct of the *Chaaragar Mausoleum* could not help the characters of the novel gathered there as they had to witness a bomb blast there. In the aftermath of the bomb blast, Lily gets caught and killed by the Police as an act of righteousness (*TGL*, p.349). *Chaaragar* Mausoleum could not provide the emotional healing to the separation of lovers. On the contrary, coming here led Lily to his death. The meaning and metaphor of *chaaragar* has the same sad connotation in *TGL* as has been used since centuries in Urdu poetry. Hence, *Chaaragar* Mausoleum refers to the inadequacy of religious places to heal the people in the novel. By incorporating popular word *chaaragar*, from ghazal tradition, the narrative invokes the same poignant and gloomy mood which was once the most prominent characteristic of ghazal tradition which has been employed to lament at the prevailing injustice, anarchy and lawlessness depicted in the novel.

In conclusion, Aslam's text echoes the concerns of remarkable classical Urdu poets who initiated and diversified the tradition of Urdu ghazal in the subcontinent.

His text is an extension of diction, themes, symbols, and metaphors commonly used in Urdu classical poetry which mainly advocates the political discourses of modern ghazal of Iqbal, Faiz and Shifai. *TGL* laments the intermittent individual and collective tragedies of Pakistan in prose by borrowing metaphors from Urdu ghazal tradition and quoting real life events. Overall, the novel explores the explicit and implicit impact of Urdu poetry and this intertextual connection can be traced with the help of specific words like *Zamana*, *Chaaragar*, explicit spatial structures of Cordoba Mosque, and direct quotations from classical Urdu poets that enrich the intercultural and inter-linguistic insertion made by the author. Hence, there are multiple intertextual, metatextual and paratextual affinities between this text and Urdu classical poetry. Aslam has inherited the poetic sensibility of his ancestors and he draws usefully on Urdu poetic tradition for commenting on the contemporary era's tragic situation. In writing *The Golden Legend*, he has largely been successful in infusing a new spirit (of meanings) in classical Urdu poetic diction and metaphors by forging a new literary tradition of Urdu inspired poetic-prose in the mainstream contemporary Anglophone fiction

References

- Ahmad, Z. (1981). Iqbal's concept of Islamic polity. *Pakistan Horizon*, 34 (2), 1981, 44-58.
- Ahmed, F. (1984). Faiz Ahmed Faiz. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 19 (1), 2071.
- Alfaro, M. J. M. (1996). Intertextuality: Origins and development of the concept. *Atlantis*, 18 (½), 268-285.
- Ali, A. S. (1990). The true subject: The poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz. *Grand Street*, 9 (2) 129-138.
- Ali, M. F. (2013, March 9). 125 Christian houses burnt over blasphemy. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/791491>.
- Amarakeerthi, L. (2003). River of fire: Critiquing the ideology of history. *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, 25-44.
- Anand, M. R. (1985). Reminiscences of Faiz Ahmad Faiz." *Indian Literature*, 28 (2), 9-22.
- Aslam, N. (2004). *Maps for lost lovers*. Vintage, 2004.
- Aslam, N. (1993). *Season of the rainbirds*. Random House India.
- Aslam, N. (2013). *The Blind man's garden*. Random House India.

- Aslam, N. (2017). *The Golden legend*. Faber & Faber.
- Aslam, N. (2017, February 20). *Interview with editor Faber & Faber*. Retrieved from <https://www.faber.co.uk/blog/editor-to-author-an-interview-with-nadeem-aslam/>.
- Barthes, R. (1981). Theory of the text, in *Untying the text* edited by Robert Young. London: Routledge, 31-47.
- BBC Asia. (2015, May 21). [Pakistan charges 106 over Christian couple's lynching](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32828330). Retrieved by <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32828330>.
- BBC. (1998, May 7). *Dispatches-Karachi*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/88890.stm.
- Chambers, C. (2011). Nadeem Aslam. In *British Muslim fictions: Interviews with contemporary writers*, by Claire Chambers, Palgrave Macmillan, 134-157.
- Childs, P. & J. Green. (2013). Nadeem Aslam. In *Aesthetics and ethics in Twenty-first century British novels*, edited by Peter Childs & James Green, Bloomsbury, 95-126.
- Clements, M. (2016). Re-culturing Islam- Nadeem Aslam's mausoleum fiction. In *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim perspective: Rushdie, Hamid, Aslam*, by Madeline Clements, Palgrave Macmillan, 88-121.
- Coppola, C. (1990). Faiz Ahmed Faiz. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 25 (2), 125-126.
- Dawn. (2010, July 3). *Data Darbar attack*. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/544857>.
- Eliot, T. S. (1971). Tradition and the individual talent. *Critical Theory since Plato*. Edited by Hazard Adams. Trans. S. H. Butcher, Harcourt, 784-87.
- Faiz, A. Faiz. *Nuskha haye wafa*. Kaarwan Press. Lahore.
- Feigel, L. (2016, December 28). The golden legend review – beauty and pain in Pakistan. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/dec/28/the-golden-legend-nadeem-aslam-review-pakistan>.
- Forbes, M. (2017, January 13). Book review: Nadeem Aslam's *The golden legend* – Pakistan's people in freefall. *The National: Arts and Life*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-life/the-review/book-review-nadeem-aslams-the-golden-legend--pakistans-people-in-freefall>.

- Garmeson, L. (2017, January 13). *The golden legend* by Nadeem Aslam — of love and loss. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/do63e9e6-d7f9-11e6-944b-e7eb37a6aa8e>.
- Genette, G. (1989). *Palimpsestos: la literatura en segundo grado*. Trans. C. Fernández Prieto. Taurus.
- Hassan, K. (2006). Faiz- A summing up. *O city of lights- Faiz Ahmed Faiz: Selected poetry and biographical notes*. Oxford University Press, 4-12.
- Hayat, U. (2016, May 20). Reimagining Iqbal at the mosque of Cordoba. *The Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1258712>.
- Hayder, Q. (1959). *Aag ka darya*. Sang e Meel Publications.
- Independent*. (2010, October 15). Mass versus minarets: The Cordoba controversy. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/mass-versus-minarets-the-cordoba-controversy-2108224.html>.
- Iqbal, A. (1935). Masjid-e-Qartaba. *Bal e Jibril*. Available at <http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/04/bal-e-jibril-124-masjid-e-qartaba.html>.
- Iqbal, A. (1924). Tulu e Islam. *Bang-e-Dara* 163. Available at <http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/04/bang-e-dra-163-tulu-e-islam.html>.
- Iqbal, A. (1935). Zamana. *Baal e Jibril- 143*. Available at <http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/04/bal-e-jibril-143-zamana.html>.
- Javed, S. (1989). *Baal e Jibreel ka tanqeedi mutaalea*. R.R. Printers.
- Kanda, K.C. (1992). *Masterpieces of Urdu ghazal from the 17th century to the 20th century*. Sterling Publishers.
- Khastgir, A. (1991). Muhammad Iqbal— The reconstructive philosopher. *India International Centre Quarterly*, 18 (1) 173-179.
- Kidwai, S. (1975). Iqbal—Philosophic poet. *Indian Literature*, 18 (3) 71-82.
- Kiernan, V. G. (1971). *Poems by Faiz*. Vanguard Books.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). Word, dialogue, and novel. In *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. Edited by Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora et al. Columbia U. Press, 64-91.
- Lall, I. (1975). Faiz—Poet of vitality. *Indian Literature*, 18 (4), 58-62.

Minder, R. (2014, June 9). Seeking to renew balance in a site's dual history. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/10/world/europe/mosque-cathedral-of-cordoba-spain-at-center-of-debate-over-religious-history.html>

Salil, K. (2009). *A treasury Of Urdu poetry*. Rajpal & Sons.

Shamsie, M. (2017, May 5). Fiction in an age of violence. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1331210>.

Shifai, Q. (n.d.). WO shakhs ki main jis se mohabbat nahin karta: *Kalam-e-Qateel Shifai*. Retrieved from <https://www.rekhta.org/ghazals/vo-shakhs-ki-main-jis-se-mohabbat-nahiin-kartaa-qateel-shifai-ghazals>.

Taj, N. (2009). A Study of the organising Principle(s) in Qurratulain Hyder's *River of fire*." *Indian Literature*, Vol. 53, No. 4, pp. 195-213.

Upstone, S. (2010). Nadeem Aslam. In *British Asian fiction: Twenty-first century voices*, by Sara Upstone, Manchester University Press, 101-119.

Williams, P. (2015). Plagiarism, palimpsest and intertextuality. *New Writing*, 12 (2), 169-180.

Zaidi, I. (n.d.). *Sharah Baal-e-Jibreel*. Nadeem Younas Printers.

Zaidi, I. (n.d.). *Sharah Baang-e-Dara*. Nadeem Younas Printers.

Ziad, H. (2005). The nature and art of discourse in the religious writings of Khwaja Mir Dard (Student Paper). *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 20, 145- 165.