A Postmodernist Critique of Hashim Nadeem’s Novel “Muqadas”

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Abstract:
Postmodernism is a newly emerged literary movement having strong influences of postcolonialism and feminism in it. It deals with various real-life incidents while keeping absurdity, intertextuality, allegory, fragmentation, faction, figures of speech, meta-narratives and reader's involvement at the background. This research has been carried out as a step to put light on the works of Pakistani Urdu writers who are ignored at international level. Basic aim of this research is to see that whether “Muqadas” written by Hashim Nadeem is a postmodern novel. In order to do so, novel “Muqadas” has been investigated in the light of postmodern elements identified by various postmodernists. The research reveals that the novel employs various postmodern elements such as faction, meta-narratives, intertextuality, alienation from emotions, absurdity and fragmentation. After a careful critical discussion, it is evident that “Muqadas” is a postmodern piece of text.

Keywords: Post colonialism, Faction, Intertextuality, Meta-narratives, Fragmentation

I. Introduction
Postmodernism is a literary movement started in late twentieth century. Apart from deconstruction other factors which helped in the emergence of postmodernism are feminism, post colonialism and advancement in technology. It is one step ahead from modernism.

In postmodernism, every element is believed to have an independent or self-sufficient existence and this contrast between various entities is considered as a positive element. Postmodernism believes upon “anti-form” rather than “form”. In postmodernism, there is no absolute truth. History is considered to have a subjective point of view, varying according to various authors and thus there are “anti-narratives” in the texts related to postmodernism. In postmodernism, center is absent. Signified is believed to have less importance as compared to signifier. A single piece of text is likely to have different meanings, so involvement of reader is encouraged. Hyper-reality/faction (amalgamation of reality and fiction) is used in postmodernism. Intertextuality, pieces of different texts combined into a single text, is also included in postmodernism. Parody is considered as a part of “pl(a)ygirism” in it. The use of allegory in postmodernism is believed to be an addition in literature. In postmodernism, pornography also plays a vital
role in literature. In short, focus of postmodernism is upon fragmentation and amalgamation of various genres and texts is considered as a positive attribute of language.

“Muqadas” is a novel, written by Pakistani writer Hashim Nadeem, published in 2013. It focuses upon certain issues and tensions of American society after the incident of 9/11. Setting of the novel is of 2010. Hashim Nadeem has dedicated this novel to a “parizaad”. He states:

“Aik parizaad k nam, jo mujh main reh kar mujhay bechain rakhta hai.”

(For a Parizaad, who makes me restless by living in me)

Here it is clear that “parizaad” is the ideal life for one person. It is present in each and every human being. It is the beautiful phase of life which can never be achieved. And when one compares this real life with that ideal life, he becomes restless.

Chapter 1 of the novel gives introduction of some main characters i.e. Ayan, Basam, Erik, Jim, Jenny, Amir bin Habib and Babar Sayedi. Ayan and Basam are brothers living in America. Basam is one year older than Ayan and he works in café Panoli apart from studying in university. Ayan is the protagonist of the novel, who is very careless and has no value for religion. He indulges himself in useless activities just for fun. Both brothers consider American society as best society. Farhad, Erik, Jim and Jenny are friends of Ayan. Although they belong to different religions but still, they are very good friends. Amir bin Habib (an Arab Muslim) is counselor of Muslim group studying in university. Babar Sayedi (a Palestinian) is member of that group. Ayan and Basam have some personal conflicts. End of the chapter introduces NYPD (New York Police Department) crack down at café Panoli in order to arrest some suspects related to “times square bomb” incident. Police arrests Basam as well.

Chapter 2 deals with fragmented views of Jim and Erik related to Pakistan. Although both are Americans, but still Erik considers Pakistanis as peaceful nation and Jim considers them criminals. This chapter also introduces other major characters, Sanam Kabir (girlfriend of Basam) and Purwa Zamir Khan (an Indian Muslim girl). This chapter also focuses upon protests carried out for freedom of Dr. Afia Siddiqui. At the end of this chapter, students belonging to Jewish group (Shamoon and Micheal) offer a huge amount of money to Ayan for the bail of Basam upon one condition, that he will join the Muslim group and after conspiracy will break it. Chapter 3 deals with friendship of Ayan and Purwa and their hot discussion upon uselessness of love and religion. The second half of this chapter deals with Ayan accepting Shamoon and Micheal’s proposal. He signs a contract with them and joins Muslim group.

In chapter 4 character of university’s dean is being introduced. Robinson Patrick, dean of university, has very grave nature. In this chapter, Ayan conspires against Muslim group and tells its secret to Jewish group due to which Muslim group faces some trouble. After two and a half months, police again arrests Basam. Babar Sayedi and Amir Bin Habib, along with other members of Muslim group, protest for his bail. Ayan is embarrassed and guilty to see all this. Later on, university suspends Amir bin Habib and Babar Sayedi for three weeks and Amir bin Habib requests Ayan to become Muslim
counselor. Story of Ayan and Purwa goes side by side. Chapter 5 starts with surprise of Ayan upon Amir bin Habib’s request. Case of Basam goes worse day by day because he is a Pakistani Muslim. Purwa tells Ayan that Urdu is the best language of world. Character of Shiekh Al Kareem is introduced. He is a very pious man and comes to America for giving lectures to Muslims related to Islam. At the end of chapter, a news fall like a bomb blast upon Muslims that Terry Johnes has decided to celebrate “Burn Quran day” on September 9th of this year.

Chapter 6 focuses upon Purwa and Ayan’s arguments related to Pakistan and India. At the end of this chapter, Ayan agrees to become Muslim counselor due to his internal guilt. In chapter 7, Shamoon and Micheal blackmail Ayan to follow their instructions but he does not pay any heed. Half of the chapter deals with protests related to Dr. Afia Siddiqui. Police arrests a Pakistani student, thinking him to be involved in time square’s incident. At the end of this chapter, Jewish group enters in the hall of Muslim group to tell real face of Ayan. In chapter 8, Muslim students try to attack Ayan because of his disloyalty. Amir bin Habib takes his side by saying that Ayan has changed now. They all forgive Ayan and make him counselor. Purwa confesses in front of Ayan that she loves him. Ayan agrees upon bike racing so that he can have money for Basam’s lawyer. In chapter 9, Ayan wins bike race from race champion (Tim) and wins a huge amount of money. He hires a good lawyer for Basam and gives that money to him. On September 9, police arrests Babar Sayedi on a doubt that he has links with terrorists who attacked World Trade Centre.

In chapter 10, Ayan goes to meet Babar Sayedi in jail. He later on meets Basam as well. For the first time he realizes that American society has double standards. This chapter also puts light on court’s decision for Dr. Afia Siddiqui. She is sentenced 86 years of imprisonment. At the end of this chapter, Office Ford (inspector of C.I.A) comes to meet Ayan and asks various questions related to religion, nationality and Al-Qaeda. In chapter 11 and 12, various issues are discussed side by side. Basam gets bail from court. He comes to know that Ayan has joined Muslim group. Both fight with each other. Ayan decides to leave the house and starts living in Muslim hostel. Case of time square bomb also comes to an end after court sentences life imprisonment to a Pakistani boy who was earlier arrested. Danish N.G.O decides to hold a seminar on cartoon sketches of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). It chooses the same university in which Ayan is studying. It gives a huge amount of fund to university and university agrees upon it. In chapter 13 and 14, Ayan requests dean to cancel that seminar but in vain. Amir bin Habib tells Ayan about his and Maria’s love story which ended due to religious differences. Basam and Ayan see and ignore each other in a shopping mall. Later on, it is revealed that Amir bin Habib has been arrested by police.

In chapter 15 and 16, Ayan gives a hot speech in favor of Islam, due to which he starts receiving life threats. Shamoon and Micheal confront him but Purwa and other female students stop them by saying that for everyone, his religion is holy. Later on, when Ayan is walking with Purwa, a van in a fast speed arrives. Purwa, in order to save Aya, comes in front of that van and gets hit. Purwa is admitted in hospital immediately. Inspector Ford tells Ayan that Basam has agreed to help C.I.A which hurts Ayan a lot. Ayan also realizes that he is in love with Purwa. At the end, court orders to deport Amir bin Habib and Babar Sayedi. In chapter 17 and 18, police investigate Purwa but she says she does not know who was driving the car. Amir bin Habib and Babar Sayedi are sent to
their native countries. Ayan, after some time, realizes that Shamoon and Micheal were sitting in the car which hit Purwa but Purwa stops him from telling all this to police. Ayan confronts Micheal and Shamoon. They seek for his forgiveness and tell that they did not want to harm anyone; they were just trying to scare him due to his speech which he had given in favor of Islam. Some members of Muslim group inform Ayan that they have decided to blow hall on the day of seminar.

In chapter 19 and 20, Ayan tries to stop Muslim group from doing so but they do not pay any heed. He goes to hospital where Purwa tell him that Laurian Booth has converted to Islam. This brings hope for Ayan. He calls the members of Muslim group in order to purchase all tickets of seminar. He sells his favorite bike for money. Shamoon and Micheal also help them in purchasing tickets. They are able to collect all tickets except one. It’s a mystery that who has that ticket. Later on, one night before seminar, police raids in order to arrest Ayan but is not able to find him. Erik, Jim, Jenny and Farhad pick him up and drop him in a Christian hostel for night stay. In last chapter, on the day of seminar, Christian students help Ayan to reach the hall. Basam comes there and says sorry to Ayan. He says he has purchased one ticket because Inspector Ford asked him to do so. But now he has realized that Inspector Ford is against Ayan and for him his family is most holy. University and Danish N.G.O is unable to conduct seminar because Ayan has all tickets and Christian and Jew students are also with him. Shiekh Al Kareem arrives and gives lecture. Inspector Ford arrests Ayan. Ayan, while sitting in police van, says “Alvida” (goodbye).

II. Literature Review

Janjua (2013) discusses various aspects of Bingo (written by Pakistani writer Tariq Rehman) in her article Situating identity on a Universal Trait. In the start of her article, she makes claim that human identity is liable to change on account of language, nationality and religion. Platt and Upstone (2015) in Postmodern literature and Race explore the question of how dramatic shifts in conceptions of race in late 20th and early 21st century have cut the edge of dramatic transitions of literary form. This book also focuses upon race and contemporary nation. Carlson (1991) in Religion and Postmodernism integrate the examination of religion owing to the interpretation present-day thought and culture. Hassan in The literature of silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett (1967) restricts himself to the studies of Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett to study the ideas related to nothingness and silence while in The Dismemberment of Orpheus (1982), he makes a table which distinguishes between modernism and postmodernism. In The Postmodern Turn (1987), he states how ideas of various literary figures Beckett, Sade, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault paved way for postmodern literature

III. Research Methodology

The method of qualitative research would be applied to analyze various postmodern elements employed in the novel *Muqadas* (2013) written by Hashim Nadeem. The present research will take *Muqadas* into consideration and try to make text analysis. The present research will analyze it in theoretical framework of postmodern elements. This research is going to answer the question “Can *Muqadas* be considered as a postmodern literary text?”

IV. Analysis of the Novel

Hashim Nadeem has used various postmodern elements in *Muqadas* (2013) which are explicated below:

A. Post Colonialism

Post colonialism is the root of postmodernism. *Muqadas* has a variety of postcolonial situations in it. For example, while talking with Ayan about problems of Muslims residing in America, Purwa says:

“University ki 70 sala tarekh main Amir Bin Habib chahta Muslim counselor bana hai. Is say pehly Muslaman Talba ko ye hsaahulat muyasar nahin thi... Tab wo sirf Esiya Yahudi counselor kay zariye apni bat intezamia tak pohanchany kay paband thay...” (38).

(During 70 years of university, Amir bin Habib is the sixth Muslim counselor. Before that, Muslim students were deprived from this opportunity... At that time, they had to convey their demands to administration via Christian or Jewish counselor...)

Apart from that Ayan, Purwa, Farhad, Amir bin Habib, Babar Sayedi, Shiekh Al Kareem and Muslim group of university are epitome of postcolonial characters. All lectures of Shiekh Al Kareem revolve around superiority of Asia, particularly Pakistan, over Europe and superiority of Islam on Judaism. In view of Farhad, his native country Iran is far better than America. Purwa, while discussing her affiliation with Urdu, says to Ayan:

“... Urdu ko main behtreen zaban samajhti hun...Kitni waseeh lughat hai Urdu ki har rishtay kay liay aur us rishtay kay ehtram kay liay kitnay mani majud hain Urdu main. Aur jo tum Angraiz Angraizi k gun gattay phirtay ho, is say zeada ghureeb aur nashaista zaban toh main nay aj tak nahin dekhi jis main maa baap kay leay bhi sirf ‘tum’ ka lafz majud hai...” (39).

(… I consider Urdu as the best language. It has vast dictionary for each relation and in order to show respect to a relation, there are a lot of meanings for that relation in Urdu. And Englishmen praise English which is the most inappropriate language I have ever seen, as in this language even for calling one’s parents only “you” is present…)

Amir Bin Habib knows very well the true cruel face of American government behind the mask of friendship and love. He knows that America is against Arab Muslim countries and want to rule them. When Ayan asks from him that why America is against Pakistan, Afghanistan and not against Arab Muslim countries, Amir Bin Habib replies with a smile:
"Inhyn 9/11 k bad har Arab Muslim kay sath purkhass hai kiun kay takrany walay jakaz n main ziada tar pilot Arab hi thay... Lakin American aapnay kuch mufadat ki waja say ab tak Araban ki khulamkhula Mukhalfat nahin kar paiy... Albatah sara nazlah Pakistan aur Afghanistan pay ja gira...” (102).

(After the incident of 9/11, America has hatred for Arab Muslims because in that incident Arab pilots were in the planes. But due to her certain interests, until now America has not gone against Arabs openly… Instead Pakistan and Afghanistan were victimized…)

Apart from that arrest of Babar Sayedi and Amir bin Habib and their deportation criticizes America and other European countries upon their double standards for Muslims and Jews.

**B. Postmodern Incidents**

In this novel, postmodern incidents are being discussed such as 9/11 and its disastrous effects, time square bomb, case of Dr. Afia Siddiqui, controversies of Tery Johnes and Kurt Westeragaard, terrorism and conversion of Laurian Booth to Islam. Apart from that in this novel there are certain paragraphs where there is discussion that Muslims should boycott Facebook as Facebook has posted some cartoons (Allah forbid) of Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W.), the last prophet of Allah according to Islam. For example, Shiekh Al Kareem, in one of his lectures, says:

"Internet par is moziamal (publication of cartoons) kay muqablay munaqqad karaiy ja ray hyn. Aur humaray iman ki kamzor idekhyn kay hum sirf ek website face book ka boycott nahin karpaiy" (67).

(There are several competitions for publication of cartoons on internet. And we have such low faith that we couldn’t even boycott a single website, Facebook.)

On 9th September, 2001 World Trade Centre was destroyed by crashing planes in it. Several Muslim countries had to pay the price. This incident is at the background of this novel. It discussed that how Muslims were arrested in America after this incident. It also shows that how Americans still remember their loved ones who died in that incident. Every year Americans light candles on September 9th at ground zero. Dr. Afia Siddiqui was a Pakistani. She was arrested by Americans on a doubt that she has links with Al-Qaeda (a terrorist organization). In this novel there are several paragraphs where narrator describes protests by Muslims living in America to free Afia Siddiqui. Later on, government sentenced 86 years of imprisonment to Dr. Afia Siddiqui. Tery Johnes is a pastor. He announced to celebrate “Burn Quan Day” on September 9th, 2010. However, his plan was cancelled due to severe protests from Muslim community. Kurt Westeragaard is a Danish cartoonist. He is criticized due to his publication of cartoon images of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). Both incidents are discussed in detail in Muqadas.

On March, 1 an unknown individual placed a small bomb in Time square located in US. There were no injuries. Several Pakistani Muslims, who were residing in America, were arrested on the basis of doubt. The novel also portrays this incident. Laurian Booth is sister-in-law of Tony Blair (ex-prime minister of England). She
converted to Islam after her ‘Holy’ experience in Iran. This incident has also been described in detail.

C. Hyper Reality/Faction

Hyper reality means adding fiction in the reality. It is a technique used by postmodern writers. Same technique is used by Hashim Nadeem in *Muqadas*. Every year, on 9th September, Americans light candles at ground zero for people who died in the incident of 9/11. The narrator describes this scene while adding some fiction in it. He represents himself as one of the participants present at ground zero. As:

“11 September ki us subah jab main university Janay kay leay ghar say nikla tou shehar main ajeb hukoalam hai… Ground zero par guzashtha raat say hi marnay walo ki yad main mom batian jalany ka Silsila shuru ho chukka tha…main nay bhi aik sham aun ki yad main roshan kar di” (86).

(On the morning of 11th September, there was mysterious silence in whole city when I went from home in order to go to university… From previous night, people had started lighting candles at ground zero in memory of dead ones. I also lit a candle.)

The narrator presents himself as one of the observers and participant of protests which were carried out for Dr. Afia Siddiqui. For example, at one-point narrator says:

“Subah jab main aur Basam ghar say niklay toh rastay main kai jagah log humain us lady doctor ki rihai k liay muzahar ykartay nazare…” (22).

(In morning, when I and Basam went out, we saw various people at various places protesting for that lady doctor (AfiaSiddiqui)).

When Terry Johnes announced that he will celebrate “Burn Quran Day” on September 11th, narrator fictionalizes the whole incident by making himself as one of the receivers and protestor against that news. He receives the news from a student who informs him:

“Florida k kisi Terry Johnes nami padri nay 11 September ko Quran Pak jalany k aelan kardea hai” (53).

(A priest from Florida, named as Terry Johnes, has announced to burn Quran Pak on 11th September.)

Apart from that, Ayan (narrator) presents himself as an observer of whole-time square bomb incident. He witnesses the arrest of a Pakistani boy on the doubt that he is being involved in that terrorist attack. Later, Ayan’s friend Ahmer informs him:

“…Us Pakistani larkay ko umer qaid ki saza ho gai hay” (108).

(…That Pakistani boy has been sentenced for life imprisonment)

Apart from that, when Purwa is admitted in hospital and Ayan goes to meet her, she gives him the news:
“Sabiq bartanwi wazir-e-azam Tony Blair ki Sali Laurian Booth nay Islam qabool kar lia hai…” (166).

(Laurian Booth, Sister-in-law of ex-prime minister, Tony Blair, has chosen Islam as her religion…)

D. Intertextuality
This term was coined by French theorist Julia Kristeva. In intertextuality, various chunks from other texts are included in a single text. This technique is vastly used in postmodern literature. Muqadas is also an epitome of intertextuality.

The very start of novel contains intertextuality when Ayan narrates a sentence spoken by King of Rome, Nero:

“Qualis qilifex perco” (9).

(Alas! The world has lost a ‘gem’ like me.)

While Ayan is arguing with Purwa upon religion, he quotes two lines from an Urdu poem:

“Masjid to bna di shab bhar main iman ki hararat walo nay,
Ma’n apna purana papi hay barso main namazi ban na saka” (30)

Later, while Shiekh Al Kareem is giving lecture to Muslim students upon the incident of 9/11, he quotes famous line of Thomas Hardy:

“Agar is kainat main koi khuda nahin, tab bhi humain ek khuda ejad kar lena chahiay...” (66).

(If there were no God, we should have to invent one.)

When police is trying to deport Babar Sayedi and Amir Bin Habib from the airport, Ayan thinks that a day will come when Palestine will be free, Babar Sayedi and Amir Bin Habib will be remembered and he says to himself the famous line of Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz:

“Lazim hay kay hum bhi dakhain gay” (151).

(It’s must that we will also see)

E. Allegory
It is a technique used by postmodernist writers in which present story has some reference with historical story. In Muqadas, story is referred many times with texts and incidents of past. For example, when two officers come to investigate Ayan and when Ayan look at them, he compares them with famous characters of Laurel and Hardy (comedians during classical Hollywood era of American cinema). Also, at the end of the novel, Shiekh Al Kareem says to members of Danish N.G.O:
“Jantay ho Muslim talba ki is university mai tadad ktm hy? sirf 313. Magar ye 313 ka hindsa humary mazhab ki tareekh main bara eham hay” (190).

(Do you know how many Muslim students are studying in this university? Only 313. But this figure of 313 carries a great importance in our religion).

Here Shiekh al Kareem gives reference of Ghazwa-e-Badar in which just 313 Muslims defeated their enemies.

F. Meta-Narratives
Postmodern writers believe that history is subjective and there is no absolute truth. Same thing is discussed in novel *Mugadas*. For example, in novel *Jim* (an American) considers Palestinians as troublemakers whereas Babar Sayedi (a Palestinian) considers Americans as colonizers. Also, in this novel, at one-point famous line of Napoleon has been quoted:

“Tarekh kya hy? Bas chand tasleem karda oraq ka palanda” (98).

(History is just a collection of approved papers.)

G. Personification
Personification is a figure of speech in which an inanimate object or an idea is given human qualities. In this novel, various things have been personified. When Ayan quarrels with Basam and goes to live in a hostel, he starts missing Basam. At that point, he says:

“yad bazat-e-khud aik ruh ki tarah hoti hay, humary guzray dino aur mazi ki rooh” (111).

(Memory is like a soul, soul of our past days.)

At another point, when Ayan sells his favorite bike to Tim in order to have some money, he says:

“Kon kehta hai bejan chezun ki zuban nahin hoti? Mujhay har qadam pay yeh mehsus hua k wo mujhay rok rahi hay...” (170).

(Who says nonliving things cannot speak? At every step I felt that she (bike) is stopping me...”

H. Reader’s Involvement
In postmodern literature, in the middle of a text, writer deviates him/herself from normal writing and starts addressing the reader directly. It enhances reader’s involvement in the text. In this novel, Hashim Nadeem addresses with readers directly at several points. For example, at one point, he addressed reader in this way:

“Hum insan kitnay ajeeb hotay hain. Jab humaray pas fursat aur Khushi kay lamhat hotay hain toh hum inhay khul kar jeenay kay bhaiy mustakbel ki uljhano main khud ko khapaiy rakhtay hain aur jab wohi mustakbel hal ban kar hum pay kisi nayi azab
(We human beings are very strange. When we have free time and happiness then instead of enjoying them, we waste our time in issues related to future and when that future comes in front of us, in a guise of bad present, we start missing our golden past…)

**J. Amalgam of various languages**

One of the key elements of postmodernism is that its piece of text is not restricted to a (particular) language. Various languages are used in a single piece of text. Although *Muqadas* has been written in Urdu language but some chunks from various languages have also been used in *Muqadas*. For example, at page number nine of the novel, a Roman sentence “Qualis qilifex perco” has been used. English has also been used in the form of:

- Sentences (“Better luck next time”, “My name is Purwa Zameer Khan”, “I am very selective” etc.)
- Phrases (“The last survivor”, “Killer instinct”, “Hormonal change”, “Man of words” etc.)
- Words (“Man”, “Gladiators”, “Lady”, “Calculative”, “Suspend” etc.)

**K. Alienation from emotions**

Postmodernists believe upon alienation of emotions. According to them, human being should have no feelings. Purwa, in the beginning of novel, while discussing love with Ayan, says:

“…Main muhabat ko chand hormones ki apni jaga say ghair mustakil tabdeli say zeada kuch nahin samajhti…” (32).

…I consider love nothing but an arbitrary shifting of hormones from their proper place…)

Ayan considers America as a place where there is no value for emotion. Austen, lawyer of Basam, agrees with Ayan at this point. While putting a light on the traits of American society, Austan says:

“Rishton aur jazbat say aari American mawshra...” (84).

(American society, empty from emotions and relations)

Instead of emotions, in this novel it is depicted, that how people give value to money. Danish N.G.O funded University a huge amount of money in order to conduct seminar in that university.

**L. Rugged individualism**

Alienation from emotions gives birth to rugged individualism. Every person just looks for his benefit without thinking about others. Rugged individualism is common in postmodern era. When Tim defeats Ayan in the game “The last survivor”, he gives a speech to Ayan which totally favors rugged individualism. He states:
Asal bat hai killer instinct...Jab tak tumharay andar mukhalif ko khatam kar denay ki fitri jiblat paida nahin ho gi. Tab tak tum adhuray hi raho gy. Jis tarah jungle kay darindo main apnay bachao or baqa kay liay dosray janwaro ko mar cheer phaar denay kar iwaj hay, thek usi tarah humari naam nehad tehzebyafta dunia ka bhi kuch aisa hi asool hai...

(The real thing is killer instinct. You are incomplete until you have not developed the natural habit of killing your opponent. Our so-called civilized world has the same rule of killing opponents, just like in jungle, where beasts kill other animals for their safety and survivor.)

**M. Question upon religion**

Postmodern writers, question upon religion. In this novel, Basam from the very start is against religion. He thinks that in order to live in a society, one should not follow religion strictly. For him family is more important than religion. While arguing with Ayan, he says:

"Kis mazhab ki baat kar rahay ho tum? Wo jis par amal kea’n saalo’n beet chukay?... Mujhay herat hoti hai tumhari in bato ‘n pay Ayan."

(You are talking about which religion? That religion, which has not been followed from several years? ... I am surprised on what you are saying Aya’n.)

**N. Fragmentation based on religion**

This novel depicts liberty related to religion. Ayan, Jim, Erik and Jenny are best friends having different religions. It shows that no matter what one’s religion is, one can still be a good friend. Even, at the start of novel, Ayan says:

"Main mazhab ko aik behad zaati fail samajhta hun”

(I consider religion as a very personal matter.)

This novel also shows two different faces of same religion, Christianity. Maria, beloved of Amir Bin Habib, belongs to Pentecost tribe of Christians who strictly follow religious customs whereas Jim, Erik and Jenny don’t follow religious rules, although they are Christians as well. In this novel, it is also discussed that each and every religion is Muqadas for its followers and no religion is superior over other. At the end of novel, various students protest in front of dean by holding banners stating:

"Apnay liay har aik ka mazhab muqadas hai”

(For every person, his religion is the holy one.)

**O. Fragmentation in societies**

Postmodern era encourages fragmentation in different societies. Every society is different from other society and this difference is appreciable. In this novel, difference between two main societies is foregrounded, that is Pakistan and America. On one side American society is discussed, which is very fast and has no time for relations and on the other hand Pakistani society is being described where:
“Pandrah biis afraad ka kunba bhi eik chaat talay guzara kar laita…” (19).

(Family of 15, 20 people can live easily under one roof…)

P. Fragmentation in views
This novel depicts that not all Americans consider Pakistanis as innocent people and not all of them consider Pakistanis criminals. Every American has his own point of view and for him his point of view is correct. Jim thinks Muslims, particularly Pakistanis, are the cause of restlessness in this world whereas Erik considers Pakistanis as innocent ones.

Q. Fragmentation in behavior
The novel depicts that most of the people have fragmented behavior. Their behavior changes according to time and situation. A kind person can be cruel at other time. Purwa puts light to this point while saying:

“Eik mulk kay Musalman dosray mulk ki Muslaman aqliat kay haq main jalus nikaltay hain… Magar woi muslaman khud apnay mulk ki masjidon ko bomb dhamaakay say ura daitay hain” (59-60).

(Muslims of one country carry out rallies for the rights of Muslim minority living in other country… But those same Muslims blow themselves with bomb blast in mosques of their own countries.)

R. Absurd ending
This novel has no definite ending. At the end of novel, when Ayan is being arrested, he says:

“alvida” (192)

(Goodbye).

But it is not sure that either he is saying goodbye forever or for certain years. Either he is going to live in jail for ever or for some years. The writer has left that all upon readers. Reader can interpret whatever he wants to, from this word “alvida”.

S. Absurdity in title of the novel
Title of novel is very confusing. It arises the question that what is holy in actual? Every character in the novel has his own interpretation related to Muqadas (holy).

- For Basam, family and siblings are MUQADAS.
- For Erik, Jim and Jenny nationality and friendship is MUQADAS.
- For Ayan, Amir Bin Habib, Maria, Babar Sayedi and Shiekh Al Kareem religion is MUQADAS.

Thus, it is totally upon the reader to take what he considers holy in this novel.
V. Conclusion

From the above carried discussion, it is clear that *Mugadas* is a postmodern novel revolving around real incidents having elements of figure of speech, rugged individualism, amalgam of various languages, faction, absurdity, intertextuality, reader’s involvement, allegory and fragmentation in it.

References


