



## Picture Imperfect: Representation of 'Zia's Islamization' in The Geometry of God

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### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

Denial,  
Islamization,  
Marginalization,  
Patriarchy,  
Resistance

*This paper critically examines The Geometry of God (2008) by Uzma Aslam Khan to discuss the repercussions of Zia's Islamization in Pakistan. The present study focuses on the establishment of patriarchal structure in the Pakistani society through legislation, culture and religion; and the resistance shown by the Pakistani women. With Zia-ul-Haq's Martial Law (1977-88), the policies and legislation of his regime in Pakistan as the backdrop, this research reflects on The Geometry of God by using the concepts of Sinha's 'Gender Trouble', Kandiyoti's 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' and Butler's Gender Performativity'. This research highlights the impacts of Zia's regime on Pakistani women, their subsequent positioning and marginalizing by the patriarchy and its reflection in the selected text. This study is significant because it highlights the then government's use of legislation as a tool to assert the state ideology and it also focuses on the resistance of women in their denial and refusal of this marginalization. With the help of this study, future research may be conducted on the same thematic patterns having a male author's perspective and also by creating a comparison and contrast between the two perspectives.*

### INTRODUCTION

The present study discusses the importance of Islam as a significant force in the lives of Pakistani people as well as the state. It affects the larger and collective life of the people of Pakistan (Clements, 2016; Rais, 2018; Long, Singh, Samad, & Talbot, 2015). Pakistan came into being in the name of religion and therefore, Islam has a primary place in the state affairs since the creation of the country. Theorists and historians like Talbot (2015), Clements (2016) and Cilano (2013) point out this issue and discuss the religion's role and its position in the state of Pakistan. For the religious forces of Pakistan, the real issue was not the "admissibility of the role of Islam in Pakistan but the kind of Islam to be established" and executed in Pakistan (Cilano, 2013). Nonetheless Islam has been an integral part of the public and private life in Pakistan since its creation.

Islam has significantly influenced the writers and the intellectuals in Pakistan. Toor reflects on the ideological landscape of Pakistan by referring to the importance of religion in Pakistan. She discusses the history of Pakistan soon after its creation, particularly the 1950s and 60s and

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compares the progressive and conservative governments (Toor, 2011). General Zia-ul-Haq's Martial Law is known as the conservative rule in Pakistan.

General Zia-ul-Haq came to power in 1977 after a military coup against the elected government of Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto. Though the Pakistani nation was already familiar with the military coup, this time the unfamiliarity was in the social and cultural change that it brought along (Toor, 2011). Zia's government had a plan to reform the country's national identity. For Zia, Islamic ideology was of the utmost importance as it had been severely neglected by the previous governments (Jalal, 2014). So, he took this reformation as his responsibility and considered himself the true reformer to bring about this ideological change through the help of military power (Jalal, 2014). General K. M. Arif (1995) in his autobiography *Working with Zia* states that "religion was central to General Zia's philosophy and much was done and undone in its name" (p. 250). Zia's Islamization is evidently shown in four areas; Judiciary, Legislation, Education and Economics. The legislative institutes composed laws such as Hudood Ordinances, Law of Evidence, and Chaadar and Chaardivari etc. Zia introduced broad range of punishments according to Shariah; flogging over several crimes, like rape, adultery, prostitution, theft, murder etc. These punishments were meant to discourage the unlawful elements from the masses and also to threaten Zia's opponents (Saha & Carr, 2001).

With this shift towards Islam, women and their treatment was another aspect of Zia's reformation plan. The position of women in the Pakistani society was to be changed along with the ideology of the state. As a result, the military dictatorship of Zia made women direct targets of a misogynist state under the purported project of Islamization (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987; Jalal, 2014; Bhasin, Menon, & Khan, 1996). According to Toor (2007), although, the word Pakistan literally means the land of the 'clean'; therefore, the women of Pakistan ought to be the 'Mothers of the Nation' (38). However, "Zia attempted to secure his power through the propagation of an explicitly misogynist ideology and by proclaiming a mission to revitalize society by correcting the immorality of women" (Toor, 2007, p.40). Hence, this study focuses on the role of Zia's Islamization in the positioning of Pakistani women and the role of women in refuting this position in the selected novel *The Geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan.

## **Aims and Objectives**

This study tries to find out:

- The positioning or mapping of women bodies in Pakistani society and its correlation to the nation-state ideology
- The process of Islamization in Pakistan and to assess its influence and effects on the masses including women.
- The reflection of these behavioral patterns in *The Geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The process of Islamization or Islamification refers to the society's transformation into an Islamic society (Kennedy, 1996). Islamization for the Ulema or Islamic parties simply means going back to the past practices and institutions with no substantial change (Munir, 1957); therefore, Islam has been detained to the execution of the Shariah laws in their original structure (Chawla, 2015). When Zia came into power, he announced that his government will follow the Nizam-e-Mustafa movement and will create a system based on Islamic Principles (Hyman, Ghayur & Kaushik, 1989). Zia entailed an agenda through which his discourse could be essentialized without any question and there "was none better than the *raison d'être* of Pakistan itself" (Weiss, 2020, p. 90). Therefore, it is argued that Zia considered Islam to be the key to dominate and prevail over the already accepted and established constitution and laws of Pakistan. In the similar line of argument, it is further argued that although Zia was a staunch believer of Islam; however, he used the same as a medium and tool for his own power and political gains.

It is a common understanding that Zia strongly believed that Pakistan came into being in the name of Islam and; therefore, no matter what, Islam must prevail and must be practiced in all walks of life and everywhere respectively in the country. In addition, he declared that political, legal and economic reforms must be implemented according to the values of Quran and Sunnah (John, 2008). Zia wanted to cleanse the country, and for him, the cleansing process had to begin from what Bhutto intentionally overlooked. The binaries for the establishment of this ideology altered ingeniously. National identity was intervened not against the "morally bankrupt" (30) west, but against women of Pakistani (Lindholt & Muller, 2003). Hence a number of Islamic laws were introduced. However, what is important here is to discuss one of many, the law for the protection of women that was introduced and was named to save the sanctity of 'Chadar and Char Devari'. In addition, the women testimony was considered as half as compared to man and the number of witnesses was increased to four to prove a rape (Jaffrelot, 2015).

The motif for Zia's gender refining resonates pretentiously amongst Pakistani women. The literal meaning or translation of Chaadar aur Char Diwari is 'the veil and the four walls' and it was repeated to the point of redundancy to the Pakistani nationals; both men and women across all the institutional mechanisms the military regime had seized control of. It effectively explains the way the reformed Pakistani national identity was to make it visible- with the woman as absent presence. There is an importance of deletion and enclosure. Drawn from an Islamic rule as a head covering, obligatory type of dress for all women, the introduction of the first part of the slogan "Chaadar" demonstrates that the female body was the first and foremost, is to be regulated. Thus, I argue that the women body was used as an object that requires covering for its survival. If the object (female body) is covered it may survive or else face the consequences, the consequences that are abundantly presented and highlighted in the above-mentioned fiction.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present study is qualitative in nature in which the method of close textual analysis of the selected text of *The Geometry of God* (2008) through the concepts of Sinha's 'Gender and

Nation' (2000), Kandiyoti's 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' (1987) and Butler's Gender Performativity' (1990). The major characters of Zahoor, Amal and Mehwish are selected to explore their lives under Zia's rule, and to assess their decisions to live their life. With the help of the selected theoretical framework, the present analysis focuses on the subordination of women in the patriarchal culture, gender repression against women, their codification, and women's resistance to it.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The legislation done with regards to Pakistani women presented the idea of women subjugation in the society of Pakistan. Zia writes in Faith and Feminism in Pakistan that the increasing Islamization of the Pakistani state and society has "challenged practically all basic liberties, freedoms and security for women" (2017, p.125). Most of the steps taken for Zia's Islamization targeted women in regulating their mobility (Toor, 2011, p. 106). The policy of women's dress and their deportment and their appearance in public sphere was further aided by the government's anti-obscenity campaign, which essentially equated women in public sphere with obscenity (Khan, 2008; Saigol, 2010). Body shaming and politics regarding women's body during Zia regime was a hot debate as well as a nuisance. Much has been written about it then and over the period. Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God* (2008) is one such example for analysis.

Uzma Aslam Khan's third novel *The Geometry of God* (2008) is set in the Pakistan of 1980s and 1990s. Khan revisits the times of Zia's Islamization and re-examines the turbulent history of Pakistan through the analysis of the importance of Islam in the country. Her narrative world portrays Islam simultaneously at the level of state and what Gilmartin (2010) has called the everyday life in Pakistan. The story of the novel revolves around Zahoor ud Din, a palaeontologist professor, who teaches evolution at the university, and hence brings his beliefs into direct rivalry with that of Zia's and his allies. He becomes a "dangerous man" for the government as he threatens the state's ideology (Khan, 2008). Amal and Mehwish are the grand daughters of Zahoor.

As the twenty-first century is approached by the nation, Amal follows the love of her grandfather for science and being a woman becomes the ground breaker in the academic world of an Islamic state. The day when the young Amal, only eight years old, discovers a significant fossil on a dig with her grandfather Zahoor, her younger sister Mehwish turns blind, apparently from looking so long towards the sun. Zahoor, who is attacked severely by Islamic fundamentalists, heartens Amal's inquisitiveness, and she takes science as her future field and becomes a scientist, also takes the responsibility of being the guardian of Mehwish. Their grandfather always gives confidence to Mehwish, to become the poet she wants to. She narrates her portions of the story in a light-hearted made-up language merging English and Urdu.

Amal's character becomes important once her grandfather, Zahoor ud Din is rejected and banned by Zia's government for his scientific teachings. Zahoor puts all his trust in Amal. Unlike the typical Asian patriarchs, who would expect their sons or grandsons to help and succeed their fathers in the earnings and the protection of the family and transmit generations of a family,

Zahoor ul Din believes Amal, his granddaughter, to be his successor in science, and to take ahead his legacy. At the same time, he does not have the fundamentalists' approach that the "power in the...gender order is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men (Connell, 2005, p. 234)." However, Zahoor has never practiced women subjugation. He rather sees Amal as an intelligent girl who is gifted with enlightenment. He wants her to grow into an independent and strong woman who may carry his mission forward and may fulfil his dreams. Therefore, he gifts his old microscope to her, which is a symbol of transferring passing his talents to her. After he leaves, Amal is left alone to find the key to complete the "tree of life" (Khan, 2008, p.132).

In contrast to Zahoor, Mirza Inayat Anwar, the Vice President of Jamiaat-e-Pedaish (JeP), "The Party of Creation", represents the novel's other extreme. Anwar thinks that women need to be barred from the actual fieldwork. His mentality is the "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordinate position of women" (Connell, 2005, p. 237). He is the portrayal of Zia's agenda in letter and spirit. He, like his president, believes in the importance positioned by Islam on reticence, piety and chastity, predominantly for women, be it concerning something as regular as the dress code, social behavior, etc, (Thanwi, 2008). Hence it is no surprise then that in Zia's Pakistan, the national/ Islamic dress became important and thus given an official status/ uniform as in "full sleeves shalwar kameez with a chadar" (Toor, 2011, p.132). Women were banned on TV for the advertisements. "Modest dressing" or "national dress" was the only condition for the women to appear on the national TV (Mumtaz and Shaheed 82).

Women in Zia's Pakistan were the most marginalized section of the society (Imran, 2005). The Islamization process reinforced patriarchal way of life in Pakistan by its intense fundamentalist approach to religion (Imran, 2005). The Zina Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence made women inferior to men, and made men legally powerful as compared to women, and the interpretation of these laws according to religion restrained and weakened women's roles and undermined their rights despite their societal, financial and age characteristics. Hence the women were left at the clemency and control of laws intended to categorize them rather than to guarantee justice (Khan, 2008).

Zia's Islamization had not only subdued women through legislation, but also through the denial of practical or creative education. Apa Farzana is one such character in the novel that represents Zia's Islam in person and helps many women find forgiveness through Quran and Sunnah (Khan, 2008). She does not have any in-depth knowledge of the Quran but only represents the literal and traditional view of Islam. Amal's mother is also one of the devotees of Farzana Apa. Her job is to sensitize women about their sins and make them repent. She wants to bring women, especially the young women to the "right path" (Khan, 2008, p.189). She labels Amal and her friend as "the slaves of their senses" (Khan, 2008, p.190) and warns Amal's mother to be careful for her younger daughter Mehwish who could still be saved from the "evil path" (Khan, 2008, p.191). Apa terms Mehwish's talent of writing poetry as evil path because Mehwish has the potential to right freely through poetry and because she creative/educated. Such women are exactly what Zia regime didn't want and this is exactly why Zia imposed the legislation on women, so that the freedom of expression may not thrive in the country. Thus, Apa represents Zia's Islamization at

the domestic level, just like Miss Fauzia who does the same at institutional level, and Mirza Anwar at the public level. It shows that a society like Pakistan where males are dominant, women hardly ever are in command of their lives.

As Anwar is an embodiment of Zia's Islamization in the novel, he considers his party to be a hybrid form of parties like Jamiat-e-Islami and Jaish-e-Muhammad. Such parties pursue a radical religious agenda based on strict observance of Shariah, the Islamic Laws (Khan, 2008, p.31). They think that the youth is deviant by obsession with sexuality and by mistrust in culture and religion. Their movement's slogan is "Sirat al Mustaqeem", "The Straight/ True Path" and they are against "Maghrib za'adgi", meaning westernization. They desire to clean the "kaffir" ideas and values from their youth which culminate them (Khan, 2008, pp. 80, 83). As a result, Jamiat-e-Pedaish exploits/ manipulates and promotes radical Islamic doctrine and while doing so, it actually works against the basic Islamic principles (individual's right to life, right to freedom and freedom of expression equally for male and female). They are promoting the slogans and mission of the ruling Zia's government. The government was also working exclusively for promoting the "Seedhi Raah" for the youth of the country who according to them, had lost it, and filled their life with "Kaafir" thoughts (Khan, pp. 80, 83).

Zia's Islamization not only targeted Pakistani women, but was also in direct contrast to the modern technological education. In this regard, Jalal (2014), in *The Struggle for Pakistan, a Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, writes that Pakistan's turbulent history shows a frightening blend of opposing factors that must influence any decision made about its future. More than six and a half decades after its creation, Pakistan has yet to determine its self-proclaimed Islamic identity with respect to the essence of a modern nation state. During his regime, General Zia had instituted three extensive types of Islamic measures; which include the legal reforms (Hudood), economic regulations (zakat, usher, diyat), and, establishment of Islamic boards (Shariah courts, the Council of Islamic ideology etc). The later was to introduce basic Islamic and Quranic teachings in the educational curricula (Qadir, 2006). Qadir further writes in his book *Pakistan: Social and Cultural Transformations in a Muslim Nation*:

Gen Zia ul Haq was a conservative Muslim who shrewdly used Islam to legitimize his military rule. ... He co-opted the PNA (Pakistan National Alliance), particularly the Jamiat-e-Islami in his regime. It was a happy turn of the events for the Islamists. They had the opportunity to utilize the state's authority to push their social and cultural agenda (2006, pp. 166-67).

One aspect of such cultural agenda was to Islamize the education field as well. The Zia regime imposed blanket requirements for the students as well as the job seekers. For instance, to get a university job as a lecturer in the 1980s, you had to name all the wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and recite some religious verses such as Dua-i-Qunoot. The students also had to fulfil similar requirements to get their degrees. That option is now closed. All these rules and their implementation affected the citizens of Pakistan psychologically.

Zia's focus was less on the education of science and technology, and more on the inclusion of religious teachings in the education system of Pakistan. Both were of equal importance but he neglected the former and implemented reforms for the latter. Taking cue from such reforms,

Geometry of God highlights the same at length. For instance, the government claimed that Islamic education will “save [the youth] from foreign influences, like science! Like films!” (Khan, 2008, p. 23) The most important aspect of Islamic education by Zia’s government was rewriting of the text books of sciences and to remove any topic if they think it is contradictory to Islam. The argument of the present study here is that the topics in science books were actually not against the spirit of Islam, rather about the achievements of the Muslims in their respective fields. These topics inculcated in the students, the desire to learn more about scientific discoveries made by the Muslim scientists and scholars like Jabbar Bin Hayyan, Bu Ali Sena, Ibn Rushd and Omar Khayyam etc. It filled them with pride that Muslims were the precursors of many scientific discoveries in the world (Khan, 2008, p. 23). But this is the exact problem that Zia’s regime wanted blind followers, not the enlightened people who could question their actions and/ or who demanded answers. The same is represented in Geometry of God, where Noman Anwar, portrays the character of a blind follower of his father’s party whereas Zahoor and Amal are the progressive people who work for the new discoveries, and Mehwish is the one who questions. In the novel, Noman’s father Mirza Inayat Anwar is the member and Vice President of the ‘Party of Creation’ which is “bent upon depriving Pakistan from Western sciences” (Khan, 2008, p. 114). Noman Anwar is assigned the task of changing the text books by the president of his party. He reflects on his task thus;

Eliminate scientists from science books. Use verses from the Quran to prove their laws false. There have never been, and can never be, any discoveries, because everything is already known (Khan, 2008, p. 110).

Amal also narrates that it was a time when the weather forecasts were banned on the state television (PTV); science and history books were being rewritten, and the teaching of evolution was banned (Khan, 2008, p.38).

Hence the novel shows the process of Islamization of the pure sciences, deleting references to scientific theories and discoveries after quoting relevant verses from Quran. In one such instance, Noman uses Quranic verse to interpret the natural phenomenon; “art thou not aware that it is God who has made subservient to you, all that is on earth, and the ships that sail in the sea at His behest (22:65)” (Khan, 2008, p.111). Noman interprets it by saying that His laws make ships float or sink and we should delete all the laws by Archimedes. Moreover, it’s not only the text books but also a few teachers who have taken the task of Islamization personally, like Miss Fauzia who teaches Mehwish at school. She is not at all encouraging to Mehwish for her interest in poetry. She is very conservative and opposes anything creative in Mehwish. She is obsessed with her moral policing and believes that “a teacher does not exist, but to correct” (Khan, 2008, p. 151). Miss Fauzia serves as an example of the way teachers of the state were turned into the ideological apparatus during Zia’s regime. Thus, the novel demonstrates what happened in real life during Zia’s regime. The use of education to mould the young minds was a tool that Zia used and manipulated for his motifs. The radicalized education deeply influenced the young minds of the state and turned them into radicalized minds during and even after Zia’s regime. “The Islamists’ bias in textbooks ensured that Zia ul Haq’s ideological influence on the hearts and minds of Pakistanis lasted well beyond his period in power” (Haqqani, 2010, p.169).

General Zia’s efforts to Islamize Pakistan strengthened the Islamic fundamentalist forces and

patriarchy in the state. Geometry of God also states these facts, for instance, Zahoor stands for Darwinian patriarchy in the story who knows that women have a place in the biological and natural construction and evolution of the human society (Connell, 1998). His entire energy is mobilized to solve the puzzle of creation, epitomizing man's untiring quest for knowledge. Just like Darwin, his methodology succeeds, as it incorporates randomness, trial and error, what he calls "accidental stages" of life (Khan, 2008, p. 111). Zahoor expresses his skepticism about the plausibility of a religious worldview to meet the modern challenges and in so doing, seems not to acknowledge the crucial significance of religious imperative in the collective imagery of Pakistan (Khan, 2008, p.157). He thinks that the country ought to have a more scientific or rational outlook about human evolution (Khan, 2008, p. 125). Hence Zahoor provides ample evidences to the international research and survey teams to come to Pakistan and conduct their research regarding Tethys and Himalayas (Khan, 2008, p. 130).

Their visit to Pakistan and publication of a report on evolution is what attracts the attention of the fundamentalists. Their findings are published in an article titled as "The Blueprint of Life" which talks about the incompatibility of science and religion (Brague 100-130, 273-275). Zahoor is of the opinion that "to learn is to search for what is not written or re-written" (Khan, 2008, p. 380). He and his team have often arranged seminars on evolution for which he received warnings and threats from the Party of Creation, one of which says;

"Dear Sir,

Godlessness is a cancer whose favourite organ is pen. It must be treated by every means available or it will spread. You are being watched. You are warned" (Khan, 2008, p.109).

When Zahoor refuses to agree to the state-ideology, a fatwa is passed for Zahoor that declares him as an anti-Muslim fellow and plans are made to force him leave his duties as a scientist as well as a teacher. He is banned from teaching due to his ideas and actions; and then sacked from the university. Later he is arrested and trialed against under Section 295 B of the 'Blasphemy Law' (wilfully defiling the copy of the Holy Quran) and Section 295 C (wilful Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet) of the Pakistan Constitution, 1973 (Khan, 2008, p. 175). However, neither has he disrespected the Quran, nor defiled the name or respect of the Holy Prophet. He is only against the fundamentalists. I argue here that Zahoor and Amal's characters are the portrayal of real-life people who have an inclusive Islamic ideology. They believe in the different face of Islam that does not stop an individual from learning the fields as diverse as mathematics, poetry, anatomy and calligraphy etc. This is also Islam. The rising wave of Fundamentalism, however, revealed only one facet of Islam which was not inclusive at all. That is why such people were torn between their inclusive way of life and the fundamentalist government. Hence Zahoor says, "the world is my Ka'ba, whereas the fundamentalists believed in only one "Ka'ba, the house of Allah in Mecca, around which everything gravitates" (Khan, 2008, p. 7).

Hence, Zia's Islamization impacted the Pakistani women. The Islamization laws were rigid for women and reduced their participation in the public sphere. Muhammad Qadir (2006) writes that some of the ways and means, through which Zia's regime created this impact, are the "religious observances and pieties which have been embedded into everyday life. Sharia laws which are

grafted onto the legal system of the country, Mullahs who claim authority as the guardians of Islam, and the rights of women and minorities which have been whittled down” (p.173). This social impact made many Pakistani women, especially the educated ones, reactionary to Zia’s Islamization. These women believed that the fundamentalists have created misconceptions regarding the role of women in Islam and have intentionally portrayed it as inferior. Anita M. Weiss also refers to the same misconceptions by writing that Islam has been misunderstood as far as women is concerned. It is usually thought that women are considered inferior in Islam as they are bound to their homes. But this is actually contrary to the fact. Many practices are established in the name of Islam, which are in-fact the cultural norms only (2008, pp.2-5).

The suffocating environment in Zia’s Pakistan eroded women’s rights on one hand, while on the other, it saw the appearance of equally powerful confrontation, predominantly by women. These women, for the first time in Pakistani history, united, collected and assembled a planned activist women’s movement in order to resist Zia’s repressive laws for women (Imran, 2005; Munir, 1957). This advancement made an organized women’s opposition movement possible, that has developed in power through a variety of channels, integrating a policy that includes socio-political demands for women’s rights and dealing with them as equivalent citizens to men (Zia & Bari, 1999, pp. 81-82). It is, therefore, pertinent to write here that the commencement of the confrontation group by Pakistani women is deep-rooted in its resistance to Zia’s implementation of the gender-discriminatory Zina Hudood Ordinance (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987, p.123). Organizations like Women Action Forum (WAF), Aurat (women) Foundation and Shirkat Gah (Participation Place) etc were formed and endorsed by the women in Pakistan. These urban women’s movements, most of the time pulled from the middle and upper classes, initiated an organized countrywide resistance against the Zina Hudood Ordinance through support programs, research, writing, protests, street aggression, and press campaigns (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987, pp. 71-75). In the real history of Pakistan, the Hudood Ordinance remains as one of the high - water marks of Pakistan’s English-language press’s participation in the public sphere, mainly by its female journalists. The creation of Women’s Action Forum was a direct consequence motivated by the English-language press’s reporting with educated professional women in Pakistan, particularly lawyers and welfare workers.

Hence, we find some reactionary women characters in Pakistani fiction and Uzma Aslam Khan’s *The Geometry of God* is no exception. She portrays women’s response to the connections of state, gender and religion in Pakistan. Khan rejects the thought of single, massive, domineering females in an Islamized patriarchal state through the characters of Amal and Mehwish, representing that the religious structure of the country in reality is also far from being monumental. These modern female characters are depicted as architects of their own spaces to deal with society’s harsh dual values. Amal and Mehwish are brought up in a far more enlightened and modern way because of their educated background (Hassan, Shahriar & Bhughio, 2017). Amal is represented as the first female paleontologist of Pakistan, a profession that demands going “on digs”, even though it involves being alone “with many men” (Khan, 2008, p. 304), an unusual and rare situation in conventional societies: “she should know her natural place is at home” (Khan, 2008, p. 273). Women are constructed as the symbolic bodyguards of culture (Sinha, 2000, 92). Honor is also associated with them. The respectability of the men is directly related to the different activities of women in life (Kandiyoti, 1987, p. 187), whether they adhere to the tradition of veil and seclusion or mix in the society with the

advancement of status, will build the position of men in society. It depends on the values of society and can vary from society to society.

Amal, being a woman of one such patriarchal society, goes through the same oppression and expectations. Her parents want her to lead a life of a traditional woman. However, with the training and support of her grandfather, she manages to stand against these traditions (Hassan, Shahriar & Bhughio, 2017)). Amal's assertive nature resists her parents and achieves empowerment. In the beginning of the novel, Amal is only eight years old and she is in her mid-twenties, a grown up as we turn over the last page. With the General's arrival in the country, fossil hunting has become a perilous hobby however Amal is inflexible enough to support her grandfather in his adventures since early age. She hates those men who think that women are not fit for the field work or they should be restricted to their homes (Khan, 2008, p. 191). She wants a career in the field of fossil hunting and needs a supportive husband; therefore, she decides to marry Omar, against her parents' wishes. Omar is a "lifelong friend", a man she loves, and a person who "is not a fundamentalist" (Khan, 2008, p. 231). She knows that after marrying him, there will be no restrictions on her going for the dig. In her professional life after marriage, she rebels against conventional social standards and the repressive rules of Islamization in Pakistan that are frequently understood as specially aiming at the women of Pakistan. After they get married, Omar, Amal's husband, prefers not to pay heed to his mother's objections about Amal's work on digs alone that indicates the prospective future for Pakistani women to create space of their own choices (Khan, 2008, p. 317). Omar's mother reflects the stereotypical mindset of the patriarchal society that believes women are, "the "true essence" of national and cultural identity...as a signifier of tradition" (Kandiyoti, 1987, p. 222).

Mehwish, in spite of her blindness, dismisses the fundamental and politicized theology started by Zia ul Haq through her revolutionary use of language. Her poetic language is the "semiotic", a surfacing of the maternal body in writing, uncontrolled by the paternal symbols (Kristeva, 1989). She overcomes her weakness through the intelligent use of language. Her lack of knowledge allows her to convey views about sex, love, religion and censorship that would otherwise stay unspeakable in Pakistan's traditionalist and Islamized society. She, like her Nana Zahoor idealizes the time when "faith meant devotion to multiple pleasures--mathematics, poetry, music, anatomy, calligraphy..." (Khan, 2008, p. 27). Heteroglossia and the subversive use of language play a key role in her character. Her inoffensive yet revolutionary choice of words allows her and her listeners to identify the underlying meanings of words in the context of revered and worldly views. Mehwish's character represents the societal role of Pakistani women which was altered due to the political change, social transformation and legislation during Zia's regime. This shift in the women's role is significantly reflected in the literature produced by women writers. Both Amal and Mehwish affirm their bodily independence as well as symbolize the survival of enlightened societal spaces in Pakistani conventional society where females cannot only be viewed as ontologically defined by one trait, patriarchal religion. Women like Amal and Mehwish, though bear the brunt, but find the resilience to bridge the gap between faith and love (Hosseini, 2007; Aslam, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

After conducting the research on Uzma Aslam Khan's seminal work *The Geometry of God* and

discussing the institutionalization of Nizam-e-Mustafa through the implementation of the Islamic Laws like Hudood Ordinance and Law of Evidence, the study reveals the strict legislation regarding women of Pakistan and its implementation which directly targeted women. It also shows that Amal and Mehwish are presented in the novel as the reflection of Pakistani women of those times. These characters represent how women were restricted to house hold, but how these educated women showed resistance and dealt with those restrictions. This provides us with the female's perspective of the Zia's world.

### FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

In future a study may be conducted, based on the comparison and contrast between the characters who stood against the restricting forces and those who subdued to these forces. Also, the women fiction based on Zia's Islamization only convey the women's perspective on those times. A study on male's perspective towards Zia's Islamization may also be considered.

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