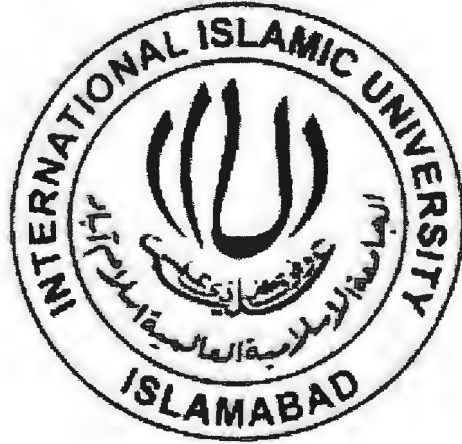


**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISLAM AND SCIENCE IN
*THE GEOMETRY OF GOD: A THEMATIC STUDY***

Submitted by:

Sajid Anwar MS (English)

Reg.No.246-FLL/MSENG/F12



Supervised by:

Dr. Hafiz Abid Masood

**Department of English Language and Literature
International Islamic University Islamabad**



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Name of Student: Sajid Anwar

Registration No: 246-FLL/MSENG/F12

Accepted by the department of English, Faculty of Languages & Literature, International Islamic University, Islamabad, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Philosophy degree in English.

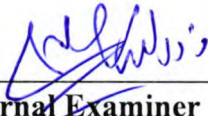
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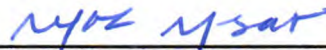
External Examiner
Dr. Shaheena Ayub Bhatti
Associate Professor/Head, Department
of Research & Publication Cell,
National University of Modern
Languages, Islamabad



Prof. Dr. Munawar Iqbal Ahmad
Dean
Faculty of Languages & Literature



Internal Examiner
Dr. Zulfqar Hyder
Assistant Professor, Department of
English, IIUI

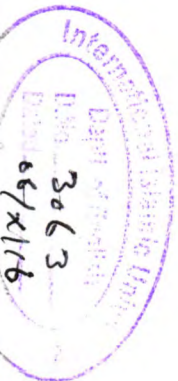


Prof. Dr. Ayaz Afsar
Chairman
Department of English, FLL



Supervisor
Dr. Hafiz Abid Masood
Assistant Professor
Department of English

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Abstract:

Preliminary study of the novel *The Geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan depicts conflict between Islam and Science. The novelist talks about General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation in Pakistan in the 1980s and banning of the teachings of evolution in the schools. In this way the writer develops a concept of binary opposition: liberalism vs. conservatism; free thinking vs. fundamentalism; reasoning vs. faith; evolutionism vs. creationism etc. This study aims to investigate the conflict between Islam and science, raised by the novelist through her characters presented to the readers as two different poles. The study also aims to analyze and discuss the theory of evolution, presented in the novel; the concept of pure science and its conflict with Quranic verses which are unquestionable or incomprehensible for the characters of the novel, particularly Noman. The study tries to explore this conflict between Islam and science and to analyze the different themes through which this conflict has been created throughout the narrative of the novel. The study was carried out in the light of the concept of binary opposition and reader's response theory by making textual analyses of the novel in order to explain the nature of the conflict created by the novelist.

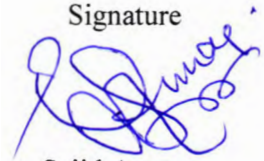
Declaration

I Mr. Sajid Anwar hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person nor the material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Place: Islamabad, Pakistan

Date: 27/10/2016

Signature



Name: Sajid Anwar

Dedication

This thesis is proudly dedicated to all my beloved family (my mother "Almarhuma", my father, my wife, my cute daughters, my brothers and all my friends).

Thank you all for your endless love, sacrifices, prayers, supports and advices.

Acknowledgements

Praise be to Him, the Creator of all. This thesis has evolved out of its original form and has gathered many debts along the way. In particular I would like to thank Dr. Hafiz Abid Masood, who has supervised this thesis throughout and has been a constant, unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement. I am indebted to him not just for his professionalism and generosity with his time, but also for his endless good humour, optimism, enthusiasm and warm hospitality. His approach to supervision represents everything that is good about doctoral study and I have learned a huge amount under his guidance. Mr. Muhammad Arif (Assistant Professor) Gomal University D. I. Khan, has also been a valuable source of guidance and encouragement, even prior to my arrival at IIUI, and I thank him for his support. It would be gross injustice not to mention my close friends and classmates Mr. Azad Rahman (Education JCO in Pakistan Army) and Mr. Muhammad Asghar Najeeb Lecturer in English, Government Postgraduate College Nowshera, for sharing their deep insight and provision of books in the former case. They always extended their supportive hands and showed their impatience in helping me wherever and whenever I needed them especially in designing, formatting, compiling and proofreading this work. Their keen interest in both my research thesis and me has been of great help to me in developing my own interest in accomplishing this tedious but valuable task. It is without exaggeration that Mr. Sulaih Khattak, Mr. Asghar Kamal Khattak, Inam Wazir, Shahan Zeb and Junaid Khattak have always proved cordial in allowing me to stay with them in hostel and carry out this laborious task at various occasions. I am grateful to the help provided by the staff of International Islamic University's Central Library and the staff of Gomal University D. I. Khan's library in provision of relevant books that made it all possible. I would also like to thank all my relatives, friends and others who

in one way or another shared their support either morally, financially, emotionally and physically, thank you all buddies.

In the end I would extend my fatherly love and gratitude to my sweet and innocent daughters Eman and Dua, who never spared a single moment of their life in showing curiosity about my thesis and absence from home. Their curious and innocent questions hard to be answered have always made me more spirited.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background:

Human life has always been in a process of transition. It can be divided into three main phases: mythology, religion and science. The known history reveals that mythology was once a driving force in human life, though according to the Holy Scriptures, religion did exist since the creation of human being. It was the religion which replaced mythology, although, it still exists in one way or the other. For example, Uzma Aslam Khan talks about the sea of 'Tethys'¹ which according to Greek mythology is a Titaness and sea goddess, wife of Oceanus.²

Religion has always played a pivotal role in human life, but modern developments in the field of science, literature and scientific approach are posing a great challenge for most of the religions. For example, the theory of evolution propounded by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) posed great challenges to religions. On the one hand, it was rejected by antievolutionists such as Judge Braswell Dean of Georgia Court of Appeals, who states: "This monkey mythology of Darwin is the cause of permissiveness, promiscuity, pills, prophylactics, perversions, pregnancies, abortions, pornography, pollution, poisoning, and proliferation of crimes of all types."³ But on the other hand, it was warmly received and

¹ Uzma, Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 4

² Danielle Hurley. *WordWeb: A Lexical Semantic Web Resource*. Leeds: U of Leeds, School of Computer Studies, 2008.

³ Christopher Toumey. *God's Own Scientists: Creationists in a Secular World*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994. p. 94

duly propagated by the evolutionists, like Thomas Henry Huxley, often known as “Darwin’s bulldog”⁴ and some people are still firmly attached to this concept.

Some philosophers, like Immanuel Kant, are of the view that science and religion cannot be in conflict because each one of them addresses different human needs and have nothing to do with one another, an approach of separation.⁵ Stephen Jay Gould also takes the same position in *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (1999). He states:

I..... do not understand why the two enterprises should experience any conflict. Science tries to document the factual character of the natural world and to develop theories that coordinate and explain these facts. Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different realm of human purposes, meanings, and values.⁶

However, it is an undeniable fact that religion and science cannot be separated. Both, religion and science have a very strong common area i.e. ‘nature’, an approach of interaction. As Muzaffar Iqbal states, “So where nature is studied through scientific methods, scientific knowledge is unavoidably incorporated into religious thoughts”.⁷ In such a situation only that religion which is compatible with ‘established science’ will survive. As we know that science is the study of physical and natural world through observation and experimentation; that whatever experimentally proved is ‘established science’. Any theory or hypothesis without observation and experimental proof cannot be regarded as science. Therefore, a religion which corresponds to empirical facts will

⁴ Quoted in Muzaffar Iqbal. *Science and Islam*. London & USA: Greenwood Press, 2007. p. viii

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Stephen, Jay Gould. *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*. New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999. p. 4

⁷ Muzaffar Iqbal. *Science and Islam*. London & USA: Greenwood Press, 2007. p. vii

strengthen itself against the religion which is incompatible with the facts established by science.

The preliminary study of the novel, *The Geometry of God*, indicates that neither of the two above mentioned approaches: separation and interaction have been employed but the approach of conflict has been used by the novelist which indicates a strong binary opposition. To what extent her characters represent two different and opposing poles of binaries? Why and what are the circumstances under which the writer adopts the conflicting binaries? Whether Islam and science are in conflict or have conformity and compatibility with each other? These are the areas which will be focused on in this study in terms of *The Geometry of God* of Uzma Aslam Khan.

1.2 Brief Introduction of the Novel:

Uzma Aslam Khan, through her characters, elucidates the conflict between Islam and science. The story of the novel engages two groups of characters: evolutionists and creationists. The former group believes in evolution, in this case, the theory of mammals' evolution, as Zahoor, an archetype of evolutionists, asserts:

The dog-whale was beginning to reverse its adaptation. It was developing underwater hearing. Its tail was getting bigger. It was going to lose its fur, drop its legs. And it was happening very slowly. Over millions of years.⁸

While the latter group rejects the creativity of man and calls it a discovery on the part of human beings, rather, they do not accede it to a discovery also. For instance, another

⁸ Uzma, Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 13

character, Junaid rejects Zahoor's concept of evolution when he states, "Your work on whales is not a creation but a discovery, though you know I believe it is neither."⁹

The evolutionists are shown making use of 'aql' i.e. reasoning while the creationists are portrayed as passionate, emotionally attached with a set of beliefs without making use of reason. For example, when Amal's father makes a sort of debate with Amal's maternal grandfather on the alphabet 'alif', the former positions that 'alif' stands for Allah, while the latter says that it stands for 'aql'. Amal's father (the creationist) is portrayed, making no use of 'aql' (reasoning) to argue that the word 'aql' starts with the 24th letter of the Urdu alphabet 'Ayin'.not 'alif'.

Discussion like above through the narrative of the novel attracts the attention of scholars like Zinck who considers the novel as a tension between the creationists who are waging for radical Islam and the evolutionists who believe in rationalism. Zinck asserts, 'It is within this critical framework that I shall examine *The Geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan (2009), focusing on the tensions between radical Islam and rationalism, as well as on poetics of dissent.'¹⁰

The novelist has shown that the evolutionists believe in the unfixing of phenomenon, as Zahoor states: "I prefer a science of fluid moments. All religious moments are unfixe."¹¹

While the creationist Junaid states: "And therefore man must fix them. The true believer is

⁹ Uzma, Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 9

¹⁰ Zinck, Pascal. "Bones of contention in Uzma Aslam Khan's' *The Geometry of God*.'" *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*. 2011. p. 2

¹¹ Uzma, Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 7

oriented in space and scheduled in time.”¹²Zahoor says that he does not need to be pointed in right direction; and that the world is his Ka’ba.¹³

The novelist has created conflict between science and the teachings of the Holy Quran through her character, Noman. First, he tries to falsify the concepts of science and scientists. He says, “There have never been, and can never be, any discoveries because everything is Already Known.”¹⁴ He is actually directed by his father who is a Vice Chairman of Party of Creation, to quote verses from the Holy Quran in order to falsify the laws of science. He makes extensive use of the verses from the Holy Quran without understanding. For example, he quotes from the Holy Quran “It is He who holds the celestial bodies in their orbits, so that they may not fall upon the earth otherwise than by His leave” (22:65). Noman comments on this verse:

If an apple falls from a tree it is His will. If it stays it is His will. Which we can’t question or understand. Delete all references to Newton and his so-called gravity.¹⁵

These are few examples given from the novel which show how the novelist has created binary opposition or conflict between Islam and science. The novel is replete with such instances which will be analyzed and discussed in the chapter of analysis/discussion through the tool of Reader’s Response Theory.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 110

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 111

1.3 Significance of the Study:

This study is of immense value in many ways. It helps the readers understand about the conflict between Islam and science highlighted in *The Geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan through her characters. It is of great help for the readers to know about theory of evolution discussed in the novel and the reaction on the part of Pakistani society. It is helpful for them to know how the theory of binary opposition corresponds with the conflict established between the characters. It benefits the readers with insight to observe through the critical lenses how secularism is spreading in Pakistani society and how irrationally reacted by the religious fundamental society of Pakistan.

1.4 Research Questions:

- Q No. 1: Why and how do the creationists, representing a certain class of Pakistani society, react to the theory of evolution through the narrative of the novel?
- Q No. 2: How does the novelist, through the characters of the novel, depict two different worlds: of creationists and of evolutionists?
- Q No. 3: What conflicts have been highlighted between science and Islam in *The Geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan through her characters?

1.5 Research Methodology:

Primarily, the study is carried out in the light of the theory of binary opposition from the perspective of orientalism. It highlights how binary opposition between two different groups: the evolutionists and creationists has been generated in the novel by the novelist through her skillful and complex narrative. The research is based upon close reading and

textual analysis of the novel through the tool of Reader's Response Theory. It is qualitative, descriptive and analytical in nature. The study is carried out by close reading of the text, exclusively those parts of the novel which are related to the theory of evolution, science and Islam and where there a conflict is raised in shape of binary opposition. Such parts of the novel have been analyzed and discussed in order to explore how Pakistani society encounters and reacts to the new challenges posed by science to Islam, discussed by the novelist through her characters.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study:

The Geometry of God of Uzma Aslam Khan includes numerous motifs and themes. The novel deals with other issues of Feminism and Marxism also. But the most dominant area of the novel is the conflict between Islam and Science. It can be judged from the quotations, cited beneath the title of the first chapter *Gateway the First: The World*, given in the following:

I believe the soul is immortal but I cannot prove it.

- IBN RUSHD (Averroes)

All nature is perverse and will not do as I wish it.

- CHARLES DARWIN

The novelist has shown Islam and Science contrary to each other thus it generates binary opposition between the two. Therefore, the present study is delimited only to the conflict between Islam and Science in *The Geometry of God*. Furthermore, it is unwieldy to cope with all those parts of texts which deal with the same subject matter. Therefore, the most

crucial fragments with the topic concerned are selected for textual analysis and discussion.

1.8 Topic Justification:

During the course work of MS English at International Islamic University, Islamabad, the researcher has studied a course entitled "Islam and Post-Modernism: Philosophy, Culture and Arts". After studying the said course, the researcher had developed his keenness for the challenges posed to Islam in post-modern era and how these challenges were responded to by the Muslim intellectuals. The novel selected for the thesis, includes numerous instances where contention and conflict has been shown through the characters, particularly on the part of passionate Pakistani Muslims, instead of facing scientific issues moderately. The researcher believes that the novelist has attempted to attract the attention of the learned Pakistani society to highlight such issues and respond to them logically. The researcher is also interested to explore the motifs behind such issues raised through the narratives by the author, particularly the diaspora writers of Pakistan.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter of the study reviews the literature in four main areas where the present study is grounded. The first area of review is the three different approaches like that of separation, conflict and inter-action between science and religion in general, and Islam and science in particular. The second area is to review research on binary opposition which includes terms like cultured/uncultured, civilized/uncivilized, educated/uneducated, liberal/conservative, secular/fundamental etc. in order to understand the discourse of the target text. The other area of the review of literature is Reader's Response Theory with the elements of which a relevant theoretical framework be developed and in turn this study will be undertaken. The last but not the least is the area of review of literature about the novelist i.e. Uzma Aslam Khan in general, and on her skillful and complex work *The Geometry of God*, in particular. The chapter concludes with a call for a new debate to identify the conflict between Science and Islam in Aslam's novel *The Geometry of God* to fill the gap in literature.

2.2 Relation between Science and Religion:

Science and Religion: The conflict between science and religion is actually a European phenomenon. For example, when Galileo, the father of modern science, claimed that the earth revolves around the sun – not the other way round, the notion went against the Church and Holy Scripture (Bible).¹⁶ The Europeans adopted different ways for the resolution of

¹⁶ Elaine Howard Ecklund. *Science VS. Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. p. 3

conflict between religion and science. As a result two different approaches or models came into being: 'two-entity-model' and 'conflict model'. The iconic figures of the first model are Kant and Gould etc. who consider science and religion two separate entities which work in their own orbits for the fulfillment of human needs and have no concern with each other. However, science which is taken to be an enterprise borne of the European Scientific Revolution of the 17th century generated a series of conflict with Christianity. This conflict was termed as 'conflict model'.¹⁷ It gained credibility both in the scholarly as well as in the popular mind. Thus, a conflict between Religion and Science took a start which extended to other religions like Islam also. The most influential and renowned exponent of the Conflict thesis John William Draper, claims in the preface of his book *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* that the history of science does not include information regarding isolated discoveries rather an ongoing conflict between two competing powers: the power of human understanding on the one side and compaction raised from conventional beliefs and the interests of human beings on the other side.¹⁸

Draper school of thought is supported by scholars like Guillermo Paz-y-Miño-C and Avelina Espinosa who view that the historical conflict between religion and science is intrinsic to the incompatibility between the belief in supernatural causation and scientific rationalism/empiricism. They put forward 'Incompatibility Hypothesis' (IH) for the explanation of endless conflict between science and faith.¹⁹

¹⁷ Muzaffar Iqbal. *Science and Islam*. London & USA: Greenwood Press, 2007. p. xvi

¹⁸ John William Draper. *History of the Conflict Religion*. D. Appleton and Co., 1875. p.vi

¹⁹ Paz-y-Miño-C, Guillermo & Avelina Espinosa. *The Everlasting Conflict Evolution-and-science versus Religiosity*. Religion and Ethics. Ed. by Gloria Simpson and Spencer Payne. New York, NOVA Publishers, 2013. pp. 73-97

The cardinal difference between the faith and the reason, according to Neil deGrasse Tyson, is that religions are based on faith while science is grounded on experimental verification. Religion and science are imperceptible approaches for comprehension of the universe for they are not compatible, though, the debate whether they are compatible or otherwise will continue forever.²⁰

Victor J. Stenger, a physicist and a philosopher, opines that religion and science are not compatible on account of certain tussles between their respective viewpoints of comprehending and the availability of substitute arguable explanations for understating the phenomena generally explicated from religious perspectives.²¹

Richard Dawkins is against the rudimentary religions which, according to him, actively subvert industrious undertakings of the science. According to him religion depraves and lessens human intellect".²² In another book of great repute, he observes that skeptical parents consider the theory of evolution in tussle with their beliefs, thus hostility is illustrated by them when evolution, the theory, is expounded by the science teachers. He describes that the word 'evolution' have been excluded from some textbooks.²³

While there is another school of thought that differs in opinion and considers science and religion, compatible with each other. Peter J. Bowler and Iwan Rhys Morus, famous exponents of science, assert religion and science do not contradict each other. The history does not reveal any contradiction between them at all. They state that the pages of history

²⁰ Neil de Grasse Tyson. *Holy Wars*: Natural History Magazine, OCT 1999. Haydenplanetarium.org. Retrieved on 2013-06-16.

²¹ Victor John Stenger. *God and the folly of faith: the incompatibility of science and religion*. Amherst, N.Y Prometheus Books, 2012. pp. 290–296.

²² Richard Dawkins. *The God Delusion*. Bantam Press, 2006. pp. 282-286

²³ Richard Dawkins. *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution*. Free Press, 2010. pp. 5-6

that explore inter-relationship between religion and science, do not reveal, neither an alliance nor enmity between them.²⁴

The modern scholarship is not supporting the Conflict Thesis as Gary Ferngren proposes a complex relationship between religion and science. He states that some of the historians have ever declared Draper-White thesis as “oversimplifying and distorting a complex relationship”.²⁵ More systematized re-evaluation is being seen in the late years of the twentieth century. This results in ever growing acknowledgement among the chroniclers of science that the relationship between science and religion has been positive in nature than is on certain occasions. conceived. Though, popular semiotics of dispute go along to exhibit the conjectured antagonism between Christianity and novel scientific notions. Studies illustrate that Christianity has frequently fashioned and supported scientific endeavours. While at some other times, both co-exist neither opposing nor supporting each other. Instances such as the trial of Galileo and Scopes that demonstrates conflict between Christianity and science were only exceptions rather than the bench mark.²⁶

Neuroscientist and a renowned scholar, Sam Harris, considers religion and science in contest. He opines that religion, in a true sense, is at the losing end against the logic of modern science.²⁷ Harris differs, nevertheless, Jerry Coyne as well as Daniel Dennett’s notions who argues that religion and science may very easily be reconciled by the people for certain phenomena are beyond strict reason.²⁸

²⁴ Peter John Bowler & Iwan Rhys Morus. *Making Modern Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 364

²⁵ Gary B. Ferngren. *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. p. ix

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Sam Harris. *Science Must Destroy Religion*. Retrieved on 28 September 2013.

²⁸ Jerry Coyne. *Does the Empirical Nature Of Science Contradict The Revelatory Nature Of Faith?*

Jamil Khan in his recent article *Religion: Fighting A Losing Battle* opines that there are considerable evidences in history where faiths have been discarded and confuted by the people and as a result stopped following them. He perceives that an unfashionable religion becomes only a myth for the people. He cites Greek mythology, as an instance, which is merely a heap of fairy tales and an apocrypha of the ancient times. Khan laments the monopoly of power lost by religion and its adherents in this post-modern world. He investigates for the remedies provided by clergymen during their 'monopoly of power'. He states that whether one accepts it or not, it is an undeniable fact that 'their apologetic attitude of trying to find explanation for religious beliefs' is a proof enough that they are waging a losing battle by making religious traditions compatible to the modern scientific concepts.²⁹

Thomas Dixon in his book *Science and Religion: A Very Short Introduction* highlights the conspiring interaction between religion and science. His book commences the debate of conflict between science and religion and poses many thought provoking questions about science and religion.³⁰

Dixon further states that whether to be argued for harmony or conflict it can be objected that any debate about inter-relationship between religion and science blots out true complexity and plurality of the terms. Religion and science, according to Dixon, are two

Retrieved on 16-6-2013

²⁹ Jamil Khan. *Religion: Fighting a Losing Battle* in "Viewpoint". Issue No. 230, December 5, 2014. <http://www.viewpointonline.net/vp230/religion-fighting-a-losing-battle/2377-religion-fighting-a-losing-battle>.

³⁰ Thomas Dixon. *Science and Religion: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. p.1

bleary categories with obscuring boundaries, though different religions and different sciences have vividly been related to each other by different ways.³¹

Francis Collins and others maintain compatibility as they disagree with the notion of incompatibility of science by Jerry Coyne and others with the religion and vice versa. They advocate many evidences and opportunities provided by the science for seeking God in nature.³² Coyne's notion is discredited by Kenneth Miller who argues that a considerable number of American scientists are adherent to the religion as well as believe in evolution. Thus, it is an ample proof that they are compatible.

Another historian Richard G. Olson opines that the interactions between religion and science in the Europe are increasingly complex – supportive on certain occasions while antagonistic on others; depending mostly and essentially on their occupation of particular place “within the spectrum of both religious and scientific attitudes, ideas, and practices.”³³

Lawrence M. Principe expresses the same views in his book that both science and religion are in concord with each other having no conflict as he states that the notion that religious and scientific fields have with respect to the history been antagonistic and isolated is not accepted by all modern chroniclers of science.³⁴

Most of the chroniclers of science are of the opinion that inter-relationship between religion and science is complex, but are of the view that there is no valid evidence of conflict at all.

³¹ Thomas Dixon. *Science and Religion: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. p. 15

³² "Excerpts of Statements by Scientists Who See No Conflict Between Their Faith and Science". National Academy of Sciences, U.S. 500 Fifth St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 2015.
<http://www.nas.edu/evolution/StatementsScience.html>

³³ Richard Gustave Olson. *Science and Religion: From Copernicus to Darwin*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2004. p. 221

³⁴ Lawrence M. Principe, *Transcript book for lecture course Science and Religion*. Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company 2006. p.23

As Colin A. Russell opines that during the different stages of history, religion and science did not so much contradict each other as essentially “independent, mutually encouraging, or even symbiotic.”³⁵

Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal asserts as quoted by Syed B. Ibrahim that observation and ‘sense perception’ provides ‘knowledge and power’. The role of religion is to provide balance and purpose in life. Sense perception and observation are, by no means, opposite experiences rather they are two different but inter-related approaches of finding the ‘Ultimate Reality’. They are in need of each other thus one complements the other. Scientific approach accesses the required ‘Ultimate Reality’ piecemeal, little by little, by means of observation, experience, investigation and experimentation while the religion acquires the total view of Reality. Both, religion and science quest for Ultimate Reality to acquire. Iqbal, therefore, as quoted by Syed, asserts that a scientist is a mystic (saint) who is in search of God.³⁶

Scientific writer Amir D. Aczel sums it up quite well in his *Why Science Can't Disprove God*. He states that we are lacking deep comprehension regarding the workings of the universe. There indeed are certain things that we are aware of; the science undoubtedly has brought marvelous truths. There are, however, many questions yet unanswered. For example, we are still unaware about the causes of the Big Bang, the beginning of life on our planet, the transformation of simple organism into complex systems etc. and above all,

³⁵ Colin A. Russell, “The Conflict of Science and Religion” in *Science and Religion*, edited by Gary B. Ferngren Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. pp. 7-8.

³⁶ Syed Ibrahim. *Sufism and Quantum Physics*. The Fountain Magazine, Issue 39, July-September, 2002. <http://www.fountainmagazine.com/Issue/detail/Sufism-and-Quantum-Physics>

about the commencement of human-consciousness, his self-awareness, feelings, intelligence and symbolic thinking etc.

He asserts that we are unaware regarding the crucial mysteries of creation. If, suppose, all such knowledge be obtained somehow, even then, human beings cannot go beyond that. The inherent limitations on the part of science and knowledge make it impossible for human beings to resolve such problems.³⁷

In the same context Uzma Aslam Khan depicts a thought provoking reflection of this dilemma in different ways through her various characters, with some camping with science while the others camping with religion. *The Geometry of God* has chucked out the internal and external conflict of creationism and evolutionism /science and religion lacking Muslim audience support in this regard.

2.2.1 Relation between Islam and Science:

The majority of the Muslim scholars believe in the compatibility of science and Islam. Muzaffar Iqbal, a well-known Muslim scholar, is of the view that Islam and post-modern science has never been in a state of conflict. Islam and science has never been considered as different disciplines. He states that from the eighth century to the eighteenth, there was not available any renown religious scholar or a scientist who had described a relationship between religion and science or written any book about the subject area. The absence of 'science and Islam' as a distinguished discipline is an ample proof that during this long

³⁷ Issac Baily, *Science vs Religion debate about arrogant scientists and unsure people of faith*, Oct 29, 2014
<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/a-different-world/article16690109.html>

period when Islam was the world's most advanced enterprise in the field of science, no need of inter-relationship between the two was felt by any one.³⁸

He further argues that Islamic categorization of knowledge or science which is a discipline that explores nature is considered as one and the same branch of knowledge which is inter-related and inter-connected with the entire branches of the knowledge. They all are related and connected with Tawhid, the concept of the Oneness of God. No discipline is perceived as independent and isolated from all other disciplines.³⁹

He opines that with the arrival of modern science in the lands of Islam during colonization of the Muslim world, a new discourse of Islam and science began. It was due to many factors: political, economic and military agendas. It abrogated eight-hundred-year-old Islamic educational tradition. Now Islam has to interact with a science based on a philosophy of nature foreign to its own conception.⁴⁰

Muzaffar Iqbal states that this modern scientific and technological advanced era is instantly reformulating complete spectrum of human existence that ranges human beings from their birth moving forward to the way they earn their livelihood, communicate, travel, establish interpersonal relationships, and die. To be sure, it is an interesting story that deserves our full attention, as the world around us reshapes through encounters of a kind never before witnessed in human history.⁴¹

Seyyed Hussein Nasr argues that out of its own genius and previous civilization, the science and art in Islam possessed stability and "it is this stability that is too often mistaken in the West today for stagnation and sterility."⁴²

³⁸ Muzaffar Iqbal. *Science and Islam*, London & USA: Greenwood Press, 2007. P. xvii

³⁹ Ibid. p. xv

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. xvii

⁴¹ Muzaffar Iqbal. *Science and Islam*, London & USA: Greenwood Press, 2007. P. xvii

⁴² Seyyed Hussein Nasr. *Science and Civilization in Islam*. Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2001. p. 21

Nasr regards Islam and science in harmony and unity. He states, "The art and sciences in Islam are based on the idea of unity, which is the heart of the Muslim revelation."⁴³ Albert Einstein, a famous physicist, states that science is lame without religion while religion is blind without science which prove his views that both Religion and Science are interdependent disciplines.⁴⁴

Robert Briffault in his remarkable work, *The Making of Humanity*, states that science exists in knowledge and thoughts based upon scientific grounds sprouted from Islamic civilization.⁴⁵

He stresses this point repeatedly that Arab civilization has momentarily contributed to the modern world in the field of science. Its fruits, however, were slow in ripening until the Moorish culture turned back to the dark ages. It was the influences of Islamic civilization, not merely the science that brought back Europe to the glow of life.⁴⁶

He further sounds off that the Greeks indeed 'systematized, generalized, and theorized' but the forbearing processes of experimentation, investigation, the minute ways of science, accumulation of positive knowledge, detailed and prolonged observation were completely strange to the temperament of the Greeks. The knowledge which is known as science arose indeed in Europe as a consequence of a new spirit of inquiry, as a result of novel ways of investigation, measurement, experiments, observations, and with the rapid growth of Mathematics in a form alien to the Greeks. It were the Arabs who introduced these methods

⁴³ Ibid. pp. 21-22

⁴⁴ Dr. Zakir Naik. *The Qur'aan and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible?* Islamic Research Foundation, March 2000.P.8 URL: <http://www.irf.net/march>

⁴⁵ Robert Briffault. *The Making of Humanity*, G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1928. pp. 190-202

⁴⁶ Ibid. p.81

and the spirit into the European world. 'Modern' science, according to Briffault, is the most 'momentous contribution of the Islamic civilization.'⁴⁷

It is a disputed and unanswered question whether scientific advancement has been hindered or promoted by Islamic culture. Religious scholars like Sayyid Qutb views that Muslims are God's appointed representatives; and that they are made responsible for acquiring all sciences; and that science can only prosper in a true Muslim society.⁴⁸

Ehsan Masood puts forward that if there is much misunderstanding regarding Islam and nature in the West, there is also much more ignorance on the part of West in acknowledging the fact regarding achievements contributed to the Islamic world, where from failure stems, which is directly received from Islamic history.⁴⁹

Mohamed Ghilan in his well-known article *Islam & Science* expresses his views that science has an amazing power which pushes religious class to opt one or the other path. He states:

Either one has to both reject what we learned through the scientific method and have faith that what they believe to be Revelation is the Truth and everything else is the devil's deception, or they relegate what they see in their sacred texts to be allegories to teach us life's lessons.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Robert Briffault. *The Making of Humanity*, G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1928. pp. 190–202

⁴⁸ Sayyid Qutb. *Milestones*. Birmingham. United Kingdom: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2006. p. 112

⁴⁹ Ehsan Masood. *Science and Islam: A History*. UK: Icon Books Ltd, 2009.p.1.

⁵⁰ Mohamed Ghilan. *Islam & Science*, May 6, 2012. URL: <http://mohamedghilan.com/>

Through various journeys to the Muslim world, Ziauddin Sardar urges the need of Islamic science, based on rigorous research and experimentation, universally applicable to all the cultures, including the culture and worldview of Islam. He maintains that Islamic approach towards reason (science) and revelation (religion) is synthetic in nature. It attempts to harmonize knowledge and values. He views that the knowledge obtained through noetic and intellectual efforts and through the holy Qur'an seems complementary. It is not less than a sign of God that makes human being able to investigate, study and comprehend nature. During the apex of Muslim civilization between the seventh and the fourteen centuries, epistemology, metaphysics and the empirical study of the nature merged to develop 'an explosion of what can be called 'scientific spirit'. Muslim scholars and scientists such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufayl, alBiruni and Ibn al-Haytham superposed the ideas of Plato and Aristotle which were based on objectivity, on their Muslim faith; as a result produced 'a unique synthesis of religion and philosophy'. They emphasized on scientific methodology also by giving necessary importance to 'systematic observation, experimentation and theory of building'.⁵¹

Taner Edis in his book, *An Illusion of Harmony: Science and Religion in Islam* maintains that the majority of Muslims applaud modern technology and honour the role being played by science in its creation. Edis is of the view that motivation for exploring scientific truth in sacred books for the Muslims is more potent than the Christians. The issue with this myth is that salient differences between medieval and the modern science have been obscured. The Muslim of medieval ages might have enjoyed advanced knowledge

⁵¹ Ziauddin Sardar. *How Do You Know? Reading Ziauddin Sardar on Islam, Science and Cultural Relations*. London: Pluto Press, 2006. p.108

regarding nature but they didn't at all sensed it the modern capacity. The cardinal difference is that how religion diffused medieval Muslim perception of reality along with other areas of knowledge. Their key concepts like God, the divine purpose of universe and morality etc. were part and parcel of the entire enterprise for the acquisition and interpretation of the knowledge, either medicine or astronomy.⁵²

The Geometry of God offers a thoughtful reflection on the clash between Islam and science depicting the bone of contention between the two through colorful dialogues and Islam has to protect the roots of Muslim society by unfolding the uncertainty overwhelming them. It articulates the tension and friction in the context of religion and science in general and Islam and Science in particular, threatening to damage the very fabric of Pakistani society. The novelist poses this modern dilemma in different ways through various characters, with some rejecting conflict between the two whereas others come down strongly to camp on one side, but the conflict between religion and science particularly between Islam and science is the prime issue tossed as an opposition in *The Geometry of God*. However, Islam has to defend against the peculiar concepts of modern or post-modern science which indeed is a challenge for Pakistani society, highlighted in the novel by Uzma Aslam Khan through her characters.

2.2.2 Quran and Science:

Dr. Zakir Naik is of the opinion that the Holy Qur'an is a book of 'ayaat' (signs) not of science. The Holy Quran includes more than six thousand 'signs' in which more than one thousand 'ayyat' are related to science. Muslims believe in the Quran being last and final

⁵² Taner Edis. *An Illusion of Harmony: Science And Religion in Islam*, Truman State, Prometheus books. 2002. p. 46-47

revelation of Allah Almighty on His last prophet in the series of prophet-hood. It is a miracle of miracles that revealed as a mercy to mankind. The signs in the Qur'an invite human beings to investigate his purpose on this planet and to lead his life in harmony with nature.⁵³

The Holy Quran, as the Holy Scripture of Muslims is replete with instances of invitation to investigate into the universe for the ultimate truth. "Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day there are indeed signs for men of understanding."⁵⁴

Dr. Zakir states that The Qur'an is that scripture and Noble book of Muslims which is replete with verses that urge and invite human beings to think, ponder, investigate, examine, study and observe the entire cosmos; from small creatures like ants and bees, to the stars and our immense universe. Islam anticipates its believers to enrich and strengthen their faith through knowledge. The Quran urges mankind to inquire and explore everything in the world in which they live, and clarify their awareness about God's existence through "knowing". Today, numerous verses in the Quran dealing with the Science have become clear and logical. He elucidates the various branches of science like astronomy, geology, biology, physics, embryology, oceanology with Quranic verses.

⁵³ Dr. Zakir Naik. *The Qur'aan and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible?* Islamic Research Foundation, March 2000. p. 8 URL: <http://www.irf.net/march>

⁵⁴ Trans. DR. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan. *The Noble Quran* (Surah Al Imran, Ayat 190). King Fahd Complex, Madina, 2004. p.104

Dr. Zakir Focused on the concept of creation of humans in The Holy Quran as: Man We did create From a quintessence (of clay); Then We placed him As (a drop of) sperm In a place of rest, firmly fixed; Then We made the sperm Into a clot of congealed blood.⁵⁵

The Noble Quran embodies undeniable signs for the believers and is in complete conformity with the spirit of Islam, filled with scientific facts and imagery that are supported by modern findings unlike the ridiculous impression breeding uncertainty depicted in the novel, *The Geometry of God*.

Ahmad Dallal in his article maintains that scientific discoveries and theories prophesied by the Qur'an have become a firm belief in the present-day Islamic world. Such prophecies on the part of Qur'an are offered as evidence of its divine origin.⁵⁶

Maurice Bucaille argues in his well-known book *The Bible, the Quran and Science* that the Holy Quran is not in contradiction even with the modern science. He states, "The Quran did not contain a single statement that was assailable from the modern scientific point of view".⁵⁷

Bucaille asserts that religion and science from Islamic point of view are 'twin sisters'. He indicates massive scientific errors in the Bible but in the Qur'an there is not a single scientific error. Bucaille central thesis is that the Holy Qur'an is entirely compatible with the modern science.

⁵⁵ Trans. DR. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan. *The Noble Quran* (Surah Al Imran, Ayat 190). King Fahd Complex, Madina, 2004. p. 455-456

⁵⁶ Ahmad Dallal. *Quran and science, Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*. Brill Publishers, 2001-2006. p. 16

⁵⁷ Maurice Bucaille. *The Bible, the Quran and science*. Trans. Alastair D. Pannell and the author. New York: Tahrike Trasile Qu'ran, 2003. p. 9

He states that he is unable to find a single error in the Holy Qur'an, whereas contrary to the Qur'an one comes across a number of errors in the Bible. He states that he is bound to ask himself how a man of seventh century A.D be so accurate in writing facts that corresponds scientific knowledge of this modern age if he had been the author of this so scientifically proven perfect a book. Human beings are unable to presents any explanation for such observation. No one can explain a denizen of Arabian Peninsula have had scientific knowledge, at a time when France was ruled by King Dagobert (629-639 A.D), 'on central subjects that was ten centuries ahead of our own'.⁵⁸

Dr. Nabil A Haroun states in his book '*Why Islam? Proof of Modern Science*' that Islam and science are simpatico with each other as The Holy Quran, the most knowledgeable and trustful revelation tapered many scientific facts and concepts in unequivocally precise terms. He states, "Paleontology is the science that deals with investigating prehistoric forms of life on earth, through the survey and study of extinct plant and animal fossils."⁵⁹

The Quran has as well referred precisely the same concept:

"Travel in the land and see how Allah originated the creation"⁶⁰

Almost all the classical as well as the modern sources agree on the point that acquisition of scientific knowledge has not only been approved rather encouraged by the Holy Qur'an. Human beings have always been advocated to ponder upon nature and universe as signs of God's creation.

⁵⁸ Muraice Bucaille. *The Bible, the Quran and science*. Trans. Alastair D. Pannell and the author. New York: Tahrike Trasile Qu'ran, 2003. p. 83

⁵⁹ Dr. Nabil A. Haroun. *Why Islam? Proofs of Modern Science*. Dar An-Nashr for uni-Egypt, 2003. p. 40

⁶⁰ Trans. DR. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan. *The Noble Quran* (Surah Al Imran, Ayat 190). King Fahd Complex, Madina, 2004. p. 531

Ibrahim B. Syed in his article corroborates that Islam has never been antagonistic to scientific approach of examination and experimentation.⁶¹ An ayat of the Qur'an, most inspiring one, is quoted in support of his view point:, "And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect."⁶²

The Holy Qur'an promotes scientific approach that helps in comprehending and exploring natural phenomenon as God's creation. The efforts of the scientists are guided to meaningful ends. The Holy Qur'an off and on reminds human beings to do tafakkur (to think), tadabbur (to deliberate) and ta'qqul (to reason).⁶³

At a certain occasions, the Holy Qur'an employs phrases like, 'Do they not ponder', 'Do they not think' etc. and asks human beings to investigate about such statement from those who are well versed. The Qur'anic approach elicits invitation to logic, reason, intelligence and rationality.⁶⁴

The encounter between creationism and evolution depicted in the novel *The Geometry of God* symbolically represent the conflict between science and religion. The novel's ideological underpinnings map out relationships that dichotomize conflicts into right/wrong binaries and discourses of self and othering. Far from subjecting the reader to an arid confrontation between the Darwinian and Creationist/Islamist world views, the novel

⁶¹ Ibrahim B. Syed. *Quran Inspires Modern Science*. Islamic Research Foundation International, Inc.7102 W. SheffordnLaneLouisville, KY 40242-6462, U.S.A. URL: <http://WWW.IRFI.ORG>

⁶² Trans. DR. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan. *The Noble Quran* (Surah Al Imran, Ayat 190). King Fahd Complex, Madina, 2004. p. 676

⁶³ Ibrahim B. Syed. *Quran Inspires Modern Science*. Islamic Research Foundation International, Inc.7102 W. SheffordnLaneLouisville, KY 40242-6462, U.S.A. URL: <http://WWW.IRFI.ORG>

⁶⁴ Ibrahim B. Syed. *Quran Inspires Modern Science*. Islamic Research Foundation International, Inc.7102 W. SheffordnLaneLouisville, KY 40242-6462, U.S.A. URL: <http://WWW.IRFI.ORG>

mediates the debates between creationism and evolution. Harun Yahya asserts that creationism invokes the fact that fossils emerged with all their complex structures and perfectly similar features to their present day analogues to demonstrate that evolution is an imaginary process or a hoax and that all living things were actually created by God. He asserts that the Darwin's theory of evolution is mere a deception and may directly be connected with terrorism, a leading issue and problem of the present-day. It teaches accidental emergence of human being who, according to Darwin, was an animal in the beginning but developed through his battle for survival which all living things undertake and where the fittest survive. The weak are destined to defeat and the strong are always at the winning end.⁶⁵

Harun commenting on *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), states that the principle that the 'fittest win' and Darwinian struggle for survival had greatly inspired Hitler. Harun quotes Hickman, a historian, who states that Hitler was greatly influenced by the theory of Darwinism; that he was an unswerving preacher of evolution theory. Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* includes numerable ideas of evolution based on the principles of struggle, examination of the weaker and survival of the fittest etc. to produce a better society. Darwin's theory has always been fiercely defended by the communists. Slogans like 'Big fishes swallow little ones', 'Man advances by waging war', 'In this world, the strong survive', 'War is virtue' all Darwin-based, lead to the root cause of terrorism, the major cause of plaguing and making filthy this planet. Kickman observes that the theory of evolution by Darwin was not erected on concrete findings rather mere and mere

⁶⁵ Harun Yahya. *The Evolution Deceit*. Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd. 1 Wynne Road London SW9 OBB United Kingdom, July 1999. p.14 URL: <http://www.evolutiondeceit.com>

assumptions. Above all, Darwin in his book *Difficulties on Theory*, confessed that the 'theory failed in the face of many critical questions'.⁶⁶

Academic circles and the media, which are at the disposition of anti-religionist power-centers, preserve an entirely evolutionist view and they inflict this on society but this evolutionary theory is nothing more than propaganda, deceit and fraud as the evolutionists are unable to clarify their stance through science and reason as for them soul is the biggest hurdle to evolution. Evolutionists are daydreamers as they console themselves by dreaming that science will one day come up with a solution to this dilemma.

However Islam has to defend the peculiar concept of evolution and *The Geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan is also one of such documents which sheds light on the issue of Creationism and evolutionism and the conflict between the two has been created throughout the discourse of the novel.

2.3 Binary opposition:

A relation that exists between linguistic terms in shape of pairs with distinctive features wherein the presence of one is the absence of other, such as voice and voiceless, or that they are like opposite poles of one another, such as day and night, is called 'binary opposition.

Binary opposition is one of the important applications in the area of structural and post-structural criticism. The essence of everything in binary opposition lies in and revealed through opposites. In binary opposition, if one thing has a quality, its opposite is quite

⁶⁶ Harun Oktar. *Why Darwinism is Incompatible with the Qur'an*. Global Publishing Istanbul, 2010. p. 155

empty of that quality. That our understanding of the objects is based on the knowledge of their being opposites from one another.⁶⁷

Jack Goody states that the categorization of binary opposition is “often value-laden and ethnocentric” with an illusory order and superficial meaning.⁶⁸

Shakespeare’s well accepted character Macbeth elicits such an approach such as “when the battle’s lost and won,” “fair is foul and foul is fair,” “nothing is but what is not,” and this pattern is almost insistently present throughout the play.

Structuralism, the theory of literature and culture, defines language as a system (synchronic system) of immanent relations among the component elements of language. The central of this is that every component element has a referential meaning which can be traced by defining the place of the element within the general structure, rather than by relating it outside that structure. When this comes to Structuralism in literary studies, “binary oppositions within literary texts becomes one of the central reading and interpretive strategies.”⁶⁹ “Binary oppositions refer to the principle of contrast between two mutually exclusive terms: on/off, up/down, left/right etc.”⁷⁰ The element being a member of one class, thus, cannot be the member of the other class.

Such a dualism seems deep-rooted in the development of human categorization. Jakobson and Halle state that “the binary opposition is a child’s first logical operation. Both opposites

⁶⁷ John Anthony Bowden Cuddon. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms, 4th edition*. London, Penguin Journal of Language Teaching and Research, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 724-730, July 2013, Academy Publisher Manufactured in Finland.

⁶⁸ Jack Goody. *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. Cambridge University Press, 1977. p. 36

⁶⁹ John William Phillips. *Structuralism and Semiotics*.

courses.nus.edu.sg/course/eljwp/structuralism.htm accessed on 28.1. 20014

⁷⁰ Chris Baldick. *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2001. p.27

TH. 16870

arise simultaneously and force the infant to choose one and to suppress the other of the two alternative terms.”⁷¹ Jonathan Culler describes that some opposites are “pertinent to larger thematic structures which encompass other antitheses presented in the text” thus they are capable of exhibiting the importance of the text from thematic perspective⁷²

Being a crucial part of the notion of structuralism, binary opposition seeks for distinctions that are staple for languages. Literary works are replete with deeper thoughts and ideas and employs artistic language. The language of the works requires to be analyzed which can be done through the tool of binary opposition. It as a cardinal tool for analyzing the works from the perspective of structuralism. It is done in the way to firstly fragmentize a literary work into pairs of opposites and then to de-fragmentize it after critical analysis to make synthesized to make it an organic whole. It is a significant tool with which reader might highlight important binaries in a work. Such binaries are integrated for developing a theoretical framework wherewith the meaning of the text might be figured out.

Another Pakistani writer Bina Shah in her short story, *The Optimist* presents the text of the story through binary opposition. The story under discussion is structured on the basis of opposites, the binary oppositions. The story is concerned with two major characters, Adnan and Raheela, who both are entirely opposite to each other in their approach, outlook, and personalities as they belong to different countries, social backgrounds, and cultures.⁷³

In Qaisra Shahraz’s novel, *The Holy Woman*, characters are portrayed in such a way male character is courageous, reserve, bold, confident, brave and rational being while the female

⁷¹ Roman Jakobson & Morris Halle. *Fundamentals of Language*. Co’s Graven Hage, 1956. p. 47

⁷² Jonathan Culler. *Structuralist Poetics*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1975. p. 73

⁷³ Bina Shah. *And the world changed: Contemporary stories by Pakistani women*. Shamsie, M. (Ed.), The Optimist. Karachi: Oxford, 2007. URL: www.journals.savap.org.pk

character is presented as shy, weak, submissive, expressive, emotional and irrational being. The discourse of a work sets mind for division of human characters and gender discrimination in society. Through this technique, a long list of binaries is constructed where one element is dominated by the other. The dominating elements always refer to male while the female is always associated with recessive elements. In a similar way *The Geometry of God* examines the plight of women in the context of modernity and radical Islam.

To wind it up in a better way, the novel includes contrasts, tensions and conflicts everywhere in the text. The world of the novel is the world of binaries. Khan connotatively constructs binaries like cultured/uncultured, civilized/uncivilized, educated/uneducated, liberal/conservative, secular/fundamental etc. in order to streamline the bone of contention between Islam and Science in her skilfully woven story *The Geometry of God*.

2.4 Reader's Response:

The theory of Reader's response is centered upon the analysis and investigation of literature on the responses of reader to the text. The theorists of Reader's Response offer two core beliefs: (1) reader's role, for better comprehension of literature, cannot be omitted and (2) that the meaning presented by text, are not passively assumed rather actively made by the reader.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Lois Tyson. *Critical theory today*. New York & London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006. p. 170.

Sheena Gillespie, Terezinha Fonseca, Anthony P Pipolo in their book indicates that the major focus of Reader's Response criticism is the diversity in readers' interpretive experiences.⁷⁵

Reader response theory has five approaches namely, Affective Stylistics, Social Reader-Response Theory, Subjective Reader-Response Theory, Psychoanalytical Reader Response Theory and Transactional Reader-Response Theory. This study attempts to analyze Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God* – through Transactional Reader-Response Theory. According to Tyson (2006) this theory is generally connected with the work of Louise Rosenblatt who devised the major principles of the theory. Rosenblatt is of the view that the reader and the text both are necessary in the production of a meaning. The reading of a text acts as a stimulus to which we respond in our own personal way. Our feelings, associations, and memories therefore come into play as we read the text, so our interpretation of a text comes forth in this way. Our past and present knowledge and all that we have and do not have come to our help in the analysis of a text. Transactional Reader Response Theory analyzes the transaction between reader and the text. Both, reader and text are termed evenly important. An efferent or aesthetic stance can be taken by the reader grounded on determinant meaning or indeterminacy of meaning in the text, respectively.

Reading transaction, for Rosenblatt, is active rather than passive because meaning of text can only be produced when the reader and text come in contact. For creating an experience, the interaction between text and reader is indispensable for both have peculiar effect upon

⁷⁵ Sheena Gillespie, Terezinha Fonseca, Anthony P Pipolo. *Literature Across Cultures*. Longman Publishing Group, 2007. p. 1034

one another. Texts are experienced and in turn meaning are produced by the readers only.⁷⁶

It can also be said that meaning is produced by transaction and the expression from reader to the text can be declared its response.⁷⁷ No text contains one and only one meaning. Reader and text, when come together, produce meaning and unequal transaction.

Rosenblatt opines that we must have an aesthetic approach towards text rather than an efferent one. When a text is read with an efferent approach, focus is given on the information of the text only. Information of the work is considered as a storehouse of ideas and facts that one may carry. Contrary to this, if a text be read with aesthetic approach, one establishes and attaches personal relationship with the work as our approach to the text must be, in Rosenblatt's words, aesthetic rather than efferent. In the case of aesthetic approach, our attention is focused on the niceties of the language of the text which as a result encourages us for making judgments. There cannot be any transaction between the reader and the text to analyze without an aesthetic approach.⁷⁸ Transactional theory offers that interaction between text and reader like a relationship between rivers and the banks of it where each has an effect upon other. Each contributes to the form and structure of the work of literature.⁷⁹

So transactional theory is "mutually shaping" exchange between reader and text. Through application of the transactional reader-response theory, one interested in *The Geometry of*

⁷⁶ Louise Michelle Rosenblatt. *Making meaning with texts: Selected essays*. Heinemann Educational Books, 2005. p. 64

⁷⁷ Louise Michelle Rosenblatt. *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of literary work*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978. p. vii

⁷⁸ Lois Tyson. *Critical Theory Today*. New York London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006. p. 173-174

⁷⁹ *Transactional Theory in the Teaching of Literature*. ERIC Digest.
URL: <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-926/theory.htm>

God, can explore in its new dimensions, meanings and interpretations as there is nothing final in the field and study of literature.

2.5 Uzma Aslam Khan, the Novelist:

Uzma Aslam Khan's works, particularly her novel, *The Geometry of God* has been greatly applauded among the well-known literary circles. Kamila Shamsie states about the story of the novel that it is a graceful, aesthetical, highly intellectual, and amazingly imaginative story which cavities politics against science, threats to men against liberty of women.⁸⁰

Nadeem Aslam states that it is a convincing and marvelous work. As a matter of fact there is no match for her this artistic presentation of senses, body and physical world.⁸¹

Many newspapers acclaimed that *The Geometry of God* is akin to being immersed in the sea of Khan's creative and exuberant clarity and vision she distills in her words. She became the most celebrated and prominent figure in most of International and National widely known and esteemed papers.

First City India Magazine reviews the novel and comments that one listens to it instead of reading it in real sense. It can be abhorred and may not be given veneration. But it speaks entirely with elegance. It can be amazing, non-complaint and curious just like the English in the mind of Mehwish who is the *zauq* (taste) of this work and sensual heart-beat of the novel. She is such a character who attracts one towards her own world. One may expect a

⁸⁰ Kamila Shamsie. "Praise for Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God*" in *Thinner than Skin*. Utter Pradesh: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012.

⁸¹ Nadeem Aslam. "Praise for Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God*" in *Thinner than Skin*. Utter Pradesh: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012.

great deal of rush ranging from shock, funniness, tenderness, absurdity..... and great SEX.⁸²

The novelist has overtly explicated various themes in her new novel, *The Geometry of God*. She combines an elegant tale of the old and new 'panache' of the age wherein the people are actual and their prevailing fears are plausible. The discourse has a causative force and intertwines a complex story. Khan turns so bold and utters anything.⁸³

Kirkus Magazine Review comments that Khan interweaves spiritual, political and romantic elements through her character and that she elicits philosophical questions evolved through power and beauty that makes the novel to be lingered in heart and mind.⁸⁴

The Washington Times reviews that Ms. Khan comes up with unflagging linguistic magic and intelligence. She unlocks the doorways onto an Islamic state, Pakistan, and its culture for the Western people. This challenging and skillful volume of the novelist provides novel ideas and tradition to the readers.⁸⁵

'Beautifully written, funny and full of tension, *The Geometry of God* not only gives great insights into Pakistani culture and thinking, but also strives to be great entertainment. With its playful language and vivid characters, it will give you what you expect from a novel: a great read.'⁸⁶

⁸² First City India Magazine. "Praise for Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God*" in *Thinner than Skin*. Utter Pradesh: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012.

⁸³ Kamila Shamsie. "Praise for Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God*" in *Thinner than Skin*. Utter Pradesh: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012.

⁸⁴ Kirkus Starred Reviews. Clockroot Publisher, Oct 2009.

URL: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/uzma-aslam-khan/the-geometry-of-god/>

⁸⁵ The Washington Times. *Book Review: Dauntless and female in Pakistan*. Thursday, Oct 15, 2009.

URL: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/oct/15/dauntless-and-female-in-pakistan/?page=all>

⁸⁶ Metro Éireann. "Uzma Aslam Khan: *The Geometry of God*" *The Susijn Agency Ltd*.

URL: <http://www.thesusijnagency.com/UzmaAslamKhan.htm>

French ambassador, Philippe Thiebaud in collaboration to two other members of the jury awarded Khan a prize for her novel *Thinner than Skin*. The jury asserts that she was awarded the prize on account of:

the eloquent and elegant way in which she reveals a myriad of different worlds with masterly restraint. The novel animates mountains, lakes, wind and fire and other elements of nature that echo the complex emotions of her characters. Through the carefully structured plot and the well-wrought patterns of recurring images and incidents, emerge insights about homeland, belonging and dislocation, central to contemporary Pakistani life.⁸⁷

Razeshta Sethna in Daily Dawn, Pakistan while admitting the artistic skills of landscaping and depicting grief and love in her novel, *Thinner than Skin*, reviews:

Thinner than Skin is set among the magnificent landscape of glaciers, mountains, rivers and valleys in northern Pakistan and the indigenous Gujjar people, handsome, hospitable and in control of their destinies until the scourge of terrorism begins to destroy their lives. The novel delves into the emotions of grief and love as the author attempts to show how lives are unraveled without warning and individuals shaped by their environment.⁸⁸

Jang Weekly Magazine Pakistan writes that the novelist employs the language with feelings and simplicity that precisely matches each and every character of the novel. She

⁸⁷ Philippe Thiebaud, et al. "French Embassy Fiction Prize 2014" *France in Pakistan*.
URL: <http://www.ambafrance-pk.org/French-Embassy-Fiction-Prize-2014>

⁸⁸ Razeshta Sethna. "Cover Story: Thinner than Skin by Uzma Aslam Khan" in *Dawn*. Jan 27, 2013.
<http://www.dawn.com/news/781646/cover-story-thinner-than-skin-by-uzma-aslam-khan>

arranges to put across the dilemma of scuffling ideologies but manages to make sympathize them one another irrespective of their disposition.⁸⁹

Chloe Diski in his article, titled 'Midnight's Children' while praising Khan's novel *Trespassing*, asserts that the novel provides self-confidence that points out the germination of a 'new generation of Pakistani novelist. It is a festivity of the curiousness about the minute details of life, significance of sensing but the novelist does not avoid to deal very skillfully with them all. She digs very intelligently into colonialism, belief and the issue of identity without assuming to present any solutions and conclusions.⁹⁰

Time Out Magazine writes that *Trespassing* skillfully evolves between huge filthy politics and private sufferings of the area.....the novelist's depiction of her home town generous, detailed and committed.⁹¹

In a nut shell, *The Geometry of God* is excellently written, gorgeous and complex stunner of a novel, a manifest inquisition of baffling relationship between science and Islam. It is not an easy read to chew and digest but one must be a conceptual reader to grasp its discourse. The novelist provides enough stuff to tread across the water without drowning.

Salman Hameed states that science is in quest for the unanswered questions about the universe. Religion, on the other hand, offers insight to seek for the natural world. He quotes Stephan J Gould, American biologist, that religion and science are two adequate but isolated sphere of life. He called them, in the words of Gould, 'Non-overlapping

⁸⁹ Jang weekly, Pakistan. "Praise for Uzma Aslam Khan" *Clockroot books*.
<http://www.clockrootbooks.com/praise/uzmapraise.html>

⁹⁰ Chloe Diski. "Midnight's Children" in *New Statesman*. 1 Sep, 2003.
<http://www.newstatesman.com/node/158281>

⁹¹ Time Out, Magazine "Praise for Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God*" in *Thinner than Skin*. Utter Pradesh: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012.

Magisteria'. Science is concerned with the physical world and religion with ethics and the purpose of life. He suggests that the building-block of the scientific approach in Pakistan need to be founded on mutual respect and isolation of them.⁹²

In order to meet the challenges of 21st century, Pakistan is in dire need of developing a strong scientific culture. The natural world provides stimulus which triggers the curiosity of exploration. Moreover, the Holy Quran, on its part stirs potentialities and inspires humanity to probe the 'natural world' through rationale. Religion responds to Modern scientific advancement in the most rigorous and convincing manner, for explanation of the 'natural world' because for a place like Pakistan, both science and religion are essential. The novel *The Geometry of God* also includes such a crucial debate on these important spheres of life.

2.5.1 *The Geometry of God*:

Khan's thought provoking artistic venture *The Geometry of God* engages the reader in a discourse between Islam and science. One of the most often repeated indictments against Pakistani English writers as Uzma Aslam Khan is that they write for and represent a minority, failing to represent the "true" Pakistan. In this panoply of religions, cultures, languages and ethnicities, I think its utmost failure on her part to have one all-inclusive perception of identity as to quote Flaubert, "no truth, only perception". Here the title of the novel *The Geometry of God* means sacred Geometry.

⁹² Salman Hameed. "The Science of Scripture" *The Express Tribune*. Sunday Magazine Feature, August 28th, 2011. URL: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/238607/the-science-of-scriptures/>

Nasr, Sayyed Hossein states that geometry, during the time of al-Biruni was named 'geodesy'. It was categorized as natural philosophy that involved form and matter combined space and time. During the period of Ibn Sina, geometry was considered among mathematical sciences. It is included, now, in physical domain.⁹³ The chief concept of Islam is the oneness of God. Islam also gives great importance to physical representation of worship. Whenever the Muslims need shelter they seek for some physical place which they transform into a place of remembrance and worship. They incline to search for some portion in building, some corner in a house and a book specifically designed for this purpose.

The science of sanctified or sacred geometry emerged purely for this purpose. It is a science that creates a space for writing the works of art that remind about oneness and greatness of Allah. But unlike the title, it seems that the prime concern of the author is presenting the concept of self and othering as she portrays the religious people as others, thus breeding uncertainty in the hearts of Pakistanis as we know that our religion is a complete code of life.

Her novel won many foreign awards like

Kirkus Reviews' Best Books. 2009

A finalist of "Foreword" magazine's Best Books. 2009

In 2010 *The Geometry of God* won the Bronze Award in the Independent Publishers Books Awards.⁹⁴

⁹³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*. Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1978. p. 215

⁹⁴ The Susijn Agency Ltd. *Uzma Aslam Khan: The Geometry of God*.
URL: <http://www.thesusijnagency.com/UzmaAslamKhan.htm>

It might be concluded, however that the author seems to have been entirely failed in convincing and winning over the hearts and souls of the majority of Muslims/ Religious Personnas of the world in general and Pakistanis in particular.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Aim and Methodology of this Study

This study aims to investigate the conflict between Islam and Science in *The Geometry of God* through the lenses of binary opposition and reader's response theory. The role on the part of reader in connection with a literary text has ever been recognized since classical ages. The theories of hermeneutics evolved by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Martin Heidegger, and Hans Georg Gadamer, and the theory of phenomenology of the theorists such as Edmund Husserl, Roman Ingarden, investigate the ways how the readers engage themselves cognitively and historically with literary texts.⁹⁵ Reader's response theory was primarily a reaction to subjectivism, author-based and text-based approaches and theories like formalism and new criticism. It was not until 1970s, when a number of theorists of the University of Constance, Germany, formulated a systematic 'Reader Response' or 'Reception' theory. Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss were the leading exponents of this theory.

The present study will essentially be analyzed from the perspective of reader's response theory in order to highlight the conflict or binary opposition generated by the novelist. Detailed discussion on reader's response theory and its importance will be discussed later in this chapter. Here it seems crucial to highlight the role of the text, author and reader in

⁹⁵ M.A.R. Habib. *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory A History*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. p. 708

the universe (world) of literature. Following diagram in figure 1 given by M.H. Abrams in his book *The Mirror and the Lamp* seems immensely helpful in this connection.

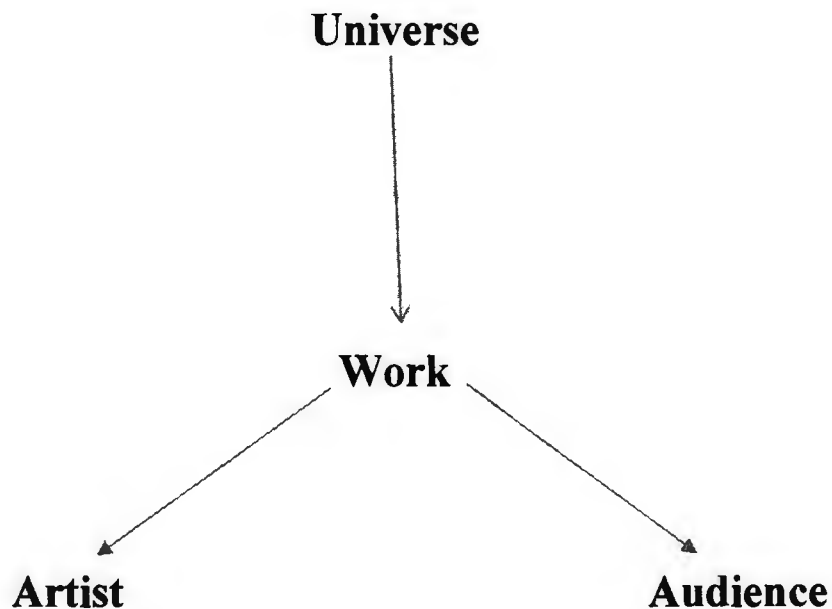


Figure 1, Abrams' Diagram in the Mirror and the Lamp (1953, p. 6).

The above-given diagram illustrates the four elements through which a literary text can be analyzed. The diagram and the connecting arrows which form a triangle show that most of the literary theories and theories of criticism rearrange "these four major elements and

orientation, tending to privilege one".⁹⁶ The discussion of the primary text of this study from the perspective of above given four elements can be greatly helpful and effective.

3.2 Where to Place the Text?

The primary text of this study reflects real geographical settings and culture. It portrays the last quarter of the twentieth century Pakistan. Literature, according to Botelho and Rudman, is a product of history and culture.⁹⁷ Similarly, the fictional narrative of the text in focus represents pluralistic society of a particular period and culture of Pakistan.

Keeping in view the cultural and historical conditions of the last decades of the twentieth century Pakistan, various techniques i.e. examination of the author's view point, her social position, motives of motivation and her influences to persuade the audience can be employed. It seems quite natural and adequate to employ the theory of New Historicism for this study. However, the goal of this study is a bit different from that of New Historicism. New Historicists attempt to comprehend and explain the events of history from cultural aspects. But the focus of this study is zeroing in on textual analysis which is undertaken through the lenses of post-modern concept of binary opposition and reader's response theory. Therefore, it seems reasonable to briefly describe the post-modern concept of binary opposition here.

⁹⁶ Vincent B. Leitch. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. London: Norton, 2001. p.5

⁹⁷ Maria Jose Botelho & Masha Kabakow Rudman. *Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature: mirrors, windows and doors*. New York: Routledge, 2009. p. 8

3.2.1 Binary Opposition:

Binary opposition is a pair of related notions, concepts or terms opposite in meaning. It is a system in which theoretical opposites are considered strictly against each other. It shows contradiction between inversely exclusive terms like up and down, white and black, on and off, right and left, day and night, light and darkness, body and soul etc. It is one of the crucial concepts being considered as fundamental to all languages and thoughts. The concept has been discussed by Ferdinand de Saussure in structuralism as well as other post-structuralists like Jacques Derrida etc. But the present study is examined from the perspective of Orientalism in terms of binary opposition.

Orientalism, according to Edward Said:

..can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing view of it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.⁹⁸

In *The Geometry of God*, though the text does not portray opposition between East and West, however, there is a vivid contrast between western scientific notions, ideas, thoughts, and Islamic idealism and thinking generated by the novelist. The writer has portrayed two different worlds: of reason/faith, logic/emotion, free-thinking/fundamentalism, liberalism/conservatism and evolutionism/creationism. The narrative of the fiction also impersonates inclinations to two different cultures on the part of the characters. Thus, all

⁹⁸ Edward Said. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978 P. 3

these aspects of the novel are analyzed and discussed through the tool of reader's response criticism.

3.2.2 Reader's Response Theory:

McQuillan opines that there is nothing like reader's response theory. He claims this on account of the crucial role which a reader plays in giving meaning to the text. He states:

A text only becomes meaningful when it is read, when a reader interacts with the words on the page to produce meaning..... it is only when the reader reads (actively participates in the construction of meaning) that a text might be said to exist.⁹⁹

McQuillan is right in his argument for all literary theories are actually reader's response. A text is of no use and credit until it is read and analyzed by a reader. The chief exponents of reader's response theory like Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish are consentient that "reading is fundamentally a process in which the reader activates or completes a text".¹⁰⁰ Iser indicates to the incompleteness and gaps in the fictional pieces, which can only be complemented and filled by a reader as "the blanks in fictional texts induces and guides the reader's constitutive activity".¹⁰¹

Benton is of the view that most often special importance is given to pedagogy and children readers. By this he means that the scholars fail "to exploit reader-response criticism as a

⁹⁹ Julian Wolfrey. ed. *Introducing Literary Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001. p. 82

¹⁰⁰ Gregory Castle. *The Blackwell Guide to the Literary Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. P.177

¹⁰¹ Wolfgang Iser. "Interaction between Text and Reader" in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. London: Norton (1974/2001) p.1684

means of understanding the nature of actual texts".¹⁰²Benton's observations and experiences vividly indicate that reader's response criticism is generally misunderstood and thus much emphasis is given to the reader. Whereas the fact remains that primarily the text should be focused on because reader-response criticism is actually a source, tool and means of analyzing the text. Every text carries structural features and some gaps intentionally or unintentionally left by the writer and the text expects the readers to infer meaning from the structures and fill those textual gaps according to their knowledge, taste, cultural background and political views etc. However, any pedagogical claim or response on part of the reader should be examined and analyzed on the thorough and deep understanding of the text. Thus text has a dominant place in the triangle of the diagram in figure 1 and reader's response theory is an important tool to deal with it.

3.3 Where to Place the Reader?

Ronald Barthes is of the opinion that readers are of two kinds: the consumers and the readers. The consumers, according to him, are those who read for stable meaning of the texts. It means that they cannot deduce the allusive and implied meaning nor can they fill the gaps, whereas the readers, what he argues, are those who are productive in the process of reading. Barthes calls such readers as writers and such a reading as 'textual analysis.'¹⁰³

It is an undeniable fact that every reader is influenced by his own cultural context and thus reads from his own perspective. However, the actual reader who is termed here as 'implied reader' is someone who point out and bears the ability to bridge the gaps. Nodelman states,

¹⁰² M, Benton. "Reader's-Response Criticism" in *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (2nd). Ed. Peter Hunt. London: Routledge (2004) pp.122-23

¹⁰³ Ronald Barthes. "Theory of the Text" in *Untying the Text*. Ed. Robert Young. (1981a) 31-47 pp. 43,44

"[all] text imply in their subject and their style the sort of reader most likely to respond positively to them".¹⁰⁴ The implied reader is a textual construction and juxtaposes his cultural knowledge in the real world by the means of reader's response theory.

3.4 Where to Place the author?

Critics and theorists differ in views and opinions about the role of an author in a literary text. Post-modern and post-structuralist theorists such as Ronald Barthes and Michel Foucault challenge the notion that a text belong to any particular author. Barthes argues that it is language that speaks, not the author. Thus, for Barthes, the meanings are exposed and determined by the language of the text.¹⁰⁵ Foucault warns the reader not to keep in mind even the name of the author while interpreting a text because it might affect the value of his interpretation.¹⁰⁶ However, Foucault's warning makes it clear that the role of the author in the text cannot be entirely neglected.

An implied author like an implied reader is considered as textual construction. He is the bearer of ideology pertaining to the text. The implied author projects the real author. His survival and existence is only possible within the ideology and knowledge which the real author is aware of. That the implied author and the real author can be congruent or otherwise is difficult to decide. However, the fact remains that the author, whether implied or real, portrays his own world view which will be attempted to zoom in through reader's response theory.

¹⁰⁴ Perry Nodelman. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children Literature*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996. p.18

¹⁰⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Author> retrieved on 25 Oct, 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

3.5 Brief Summary of Theoretical Framework:

Before summing up the theoretical undercurrents, Abram's diagram is modified by graphical representation in figure 2 regarding the position of text, author, reader and the universe. The diagram of graphical representation is given below:

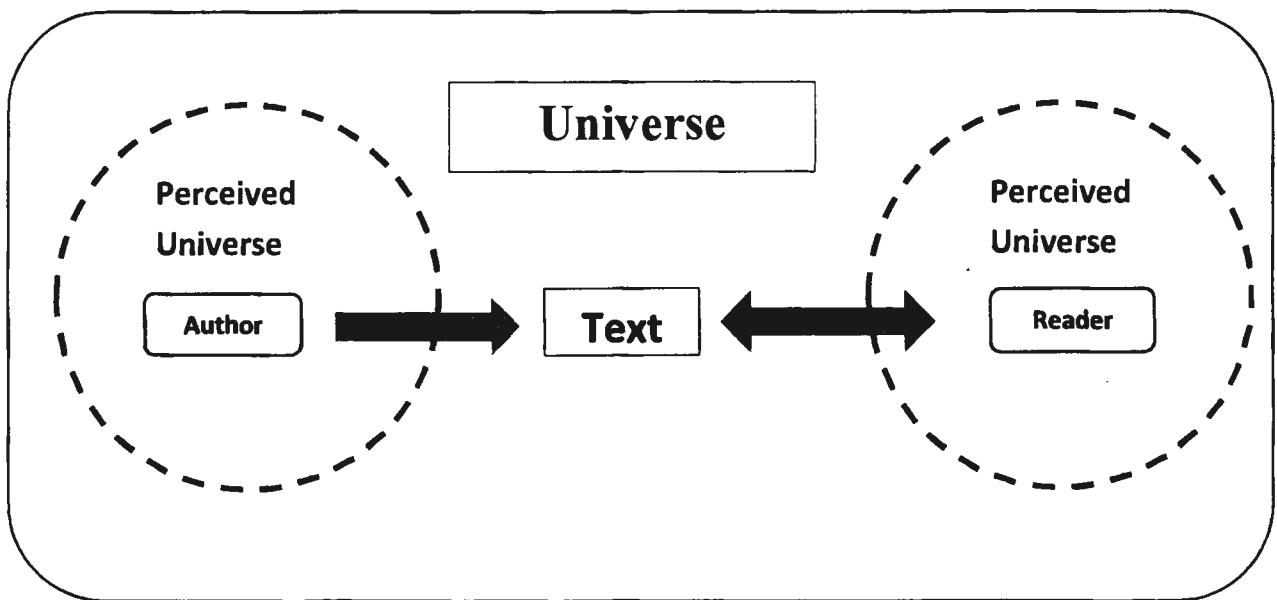


Figure 2 – An illustration of the positions of author, text, reader and the universe.

In the above illustrated diagram the three elements: author, text, and reader derive meaning from the universe. The diagram shows the respective perceived universe of the author and reader within the external larger universe. It makes it clear that every individual has its own unique way of perceiving the universe and that no one can claim of having all knowledge

about the universe. Even if there are two individuals from the same cultural background, they will perceive the universe by their own manner and thus their experiences will be different.

The perceived universe of the author as well as of the reader constantly interacts with the external larger universe. Their universe (perceived) is always constructed and reconstructed by the all occurring variations or changes in the universe. This foregrounds the dynamic nature of the acculturation and culture. It also highlights individual's cultural experiences that cannot be stabilized.

The arrows in the diagram connect the author with the text and text with the reader and vice versa. The author is someone who produces the text within the perception of his/her external larger universe or his/her own perceived universe. But once it is created or produced then according to Barthes, "the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his death, as writing begins".¹⁰⁷ The produced text becomes the part of universe as it sits in it and the reader interacts with the texts along with the universe in general within his own perceived universe. The reader attempts to interpret and gives meaning to the text. Thus a reader, as suggested in reader's response theory, actively contributes in the meaning-production of the text. Therefore, the interaction between text and reader is shown by two-way arrow.

Based upon the aforementioned discussion about the theoretical framework, this study is an attempt to analyze the target text or more accurately to undertake detailed textual

¹⁰⁷ Ronald Barthes. "The Death of the Author" in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. London: Norton, 2001. p. 1466

analysis of the novel *The Geometry of God* of Uzma Aslam Khan on the part of researcher as a reader.

Chapter Four

Analysis/Discussion

4.1 Background:

The Geometry of God is replete with various themes like feminism, human relationships, puberty etc. but above all, the conflict between science and religion, particularly Islam, may be regarded as the major theme of the novel. The conflict is developed through the narrative of the novel by employing the motif of binary opposition. The narrative of the novel depicts two different classes of Pakistani society: the evolutionist class and the creationist class. The two opposite classes are everywhere shown in a state of dispute in the novel as if they represent two different worlds. These two worlds seem to have different approaches of their own towards the phenomenon of this world.

The narrative of the text gives the impression that the creationists of Pakistani society always illogically and unreasonably react to the theory of evolution; and that it is against science and scientific approach. On the other hand, the evolutionists are shown making use of reason, intellect and logical arguments. Why and how does the creationist class react against the theory of evolution? How does the novelist portray two different worlds through the narrative? And what conflicts have been highlighted are the major areas to be focused in this study.

The study is carried out by analyzing and discussing the title of the novel the *Geometry of God*, moving forward to the five chapters, each one with numerable instances of binary opposition in terms of religion (Islam) and science. However, it is impossible to analyze and discuss each and every syntactic unit related with the same theme. Therefore, only the

most important textual instances from each chapter that highlight conflict between Islam and science are selected for analysis and discussion from the perspective of reader's response theory.

4.2 Summary of the Novel:

Pakistan has long been in a state of war because of tumultuous situation in Afghanistan. During Russian-Afghan war, American funded Islamists played an important role in retreating and ultimate defeat of Russian invasion in Afghanistan. The Islamists in Pakistan were fully supported during the dictatorial regime of General Zia Ul Haq who took enormous steps for the Islamization in Pakistan. The theory of evolution was banned to be taught in schools during his regime.

Most of the critics and experts are of the view that Zia's supporting of Mujahideen in Afghanistan and Islamization in Pakistan have brought the catastrophic extremism and fundamentalism in Pakistan. *The Geometry of God* of Uzma Aslam Khan is also one of the novels which sheds light on the issue through two different classes of Pakistani society i.e. the conservatives and the liberals or the seculars.

The novel opens with the finding of a fossil by eight-year old girl, Amal while on a trip with her palaeontologist grandfather, Zahoor, of dry mountainous range of Margalla in Pakistan. Zahoor throws light on the fossil by showing its positive and negative sides to her. On the same day, Mehwish, the younger sister of Amal gets blind by gazing at the sun while left carelessly by her nurse, and now Amal becomes her educational and emotional support.

Amal teaches Mehwish through drawing on paper by pressing the pencil hard so that Mehwish can trace the embossed image of letters and pictures on the reverse side of page. In this manner Mehwish is told by Amal about the remnants of a dog-whale discovered by Amal during her trip with her grandfather to Margalla hills. According to the evolutionist Amal, the fossil of the creature was a step forward in evolution towards the whales of the modern age; that it existed in an ancient ocean, Tethys (which in Greek mythology is a goddess of sea) before its collision with a great force and violence in Asia and commencing its transformation into present-day geological shape of the area.

Zahoor, the palaeontologist is keen to find out the remains of this ancient creature. But soon after the first finding, Pakistan comes under the influence of Zia's Islamization in 1980s. The religious class of the society assail Zahoor's and everyone else's science as they think it un-Islamic. They despise not only Charles Darwin's theory of evolution but try their utmost to prove the notions of other scientists like Archimedes, Issac Newton, Einstein, Howard, Gregor Mendel etc. wrong. Zahoor, in his defense, gives references of Muslim scientific tradition and Islamic scientists like Musa Al-Khwarzmi, the founder of Algebra apart from many other contributions in the field of mathematics; and Ibn-e-Sina, the father of modern medicine. However, he is accused of blasphemy and imprisoned during excessively criticized dictatorial era of General Zia Ul Haq.

As the narrative moves forward, Amal grows up and becomes the first female palaeontologist of her country, Pakistan. She is mostly undermined by her male counterparts for they think that it is unnatural for a female to be a palaeontologist in a country like Pakistan. She keeps her specimens, sometimes, in her handbag to avoid any damage to them by her male colleagues in the laboratory and her expulsion from the job.

The first female palaeontologist, Amal, falls in love with Omar whom she later marries, is a liberal girl. She rebels against the old traditions of the family system where she would be dominated by her mother-in-law; have babies and be a good cook only. She wants to be a scientist and intends to go to Margalla hills with other male scientists but she is strongly opposed by her mother-in-law, though, permitted by her husband. She leaves for the hills for two weeks and finds useful remnants of the creatures during her stay.

Being narrator of a considerable portion of the novel *The Geometry of God*, she represents and depicts quite a different image of a Muslim woman who is generally portrayed in a veil, having social constraints. But Amal, unlike the traditional representation of Oriental Muslim woman, most often suppressed and barred from the jobs, gives the impression of a Western woman who is free to enjoy the company of her interests and earns herself her livelihood freely without any societal restrains.

The story of another important narrator, Mehwish, is equally important. She is blind but texture and taste work as of her sight. She creates quite a unique picture of the world with the help of taste and texture and Amal's teachings. She draws diagrams of the boxes in which she groups the people with different colors and other objects to characterize them. Amal teaches and corrects her spellings which she listens and which are often indicative and suggestive for her such as 'Because' [big cause]; 'Newton' [new tin]; 'melancholy' [me-link-holy]; 'couplet' [cup lit]; 'people' [pee pull] and 'mistake' [miss take] etc. These efforts on the part of Mehwish for the comprehension of the world indicates human beings' pattern making nature which is differently conceived by the liberal and Islamic classes of Pakistani society through characters like Zahoor and Noman's father, the representatives of their respective classes.

invited the readers for novel ideas and traditions emerging in the new generation of today's Pakistan.

4.3 Title of the novel *The Geometry of God*:

The title of the novel *The Geometry of God* by itself is debatable. Geometry suggests a spatial form found in the shape of Nature representing God being His work. Nature being the work of God can be explored through observation, experimentation and reasoning. But the role of religion in the exploration and explication can also be not over-emphasized. Thus Nature is the common area of both religion and science complementing each other to understand the unknown phenomena (Ultimate Truth).

4.4 Gateway the First: The World:

At the very outset of the first chapter, the novel introduces two sisters: Amal and Mehwish, the most important characters, through proper nouns in the first paragraph; and then in the successive paragraph, a reader may observe two less important or almost unimportant characters, the father and the mother of the two sisters, by employing pronouns 'my' as if they are the possession of the important characters, without mentioning their names. On one hand, Amal is very careful right from her childhood when she is just eight years old and has "developed the habit of looking down", thinks beforehand in looking after her blind sister, Mehwish, in order to avoid undesirable situation. But, on the other hand, her mother who has no identity of her own seems to try for producing babies only as she ever says, "Baby's milk, Baby's booties. Babies sneeze, burp, fart."¹⁰⁸ These two paragraphs seem to express two different worlds dominantly described throughout the chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 3

Amal and Mehwish are representatives of the world of evolution, science, reason, concreteness, having their own identity, whereas the father and the mother represent creationism, religion, faith and abstractness without having their own identities. The text at surface level does not give the impression of 'Self' and 'Other' but its deep structure vividly portrays the concepts of civilized and uncivilized, cultured and uncultured, learned and ignorant, soft and rough, lenient and hard, hard-working and lazy, liberal and conservative etc.

The latter ones are conservative and always think negatively, as the father of Amal tells her that if she spends much of her time in the company of her Nana, a palaeontologist and the exponent of the former group, her hair will soon get grey and no one will marry her. All the three, her father, mother and perhaps the third baby leave for the company rest-house, an impression that they do not like to work but, on the other hand, Amal stays in Islamabad with her Nana; she goes with him to Margalla hills for exploration of fossils. The formers are very tender-hearted. Even the slippers that Amal's Nana wears are 'soft' made of RED (not black) leather. His tenderness and softness is so high that, although, it rained last night and there is mud everywhere but he walks so delicately that "his slippers won't get muddy"¹⁰⁹. Even "his hand" is "rough and spotless like his feet". Her Nana never forces someone to do anything and Amal takes his hand "because he never forces" her "to take it"¹¹⁰. When they reached the Margalla hills, her Nana tells in a firm and steadfast, not shakable, voice "*Nazar se dekho*" means "to look closely, with the inner eye"¹¹¹. The text gives the impression that this group of Pakistani society is steadfast, unshakable and is

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 3

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 4

clear in its expression; and that they observe the phenomenon of the world very minutely, with the inner eye. Here the novel introduces the theory of evolution through the character of Zahoor, the Nana of Amal, who tells her about an animal which was once alive and swam in the Tethys, a mythical ocean. He tells Amal while pointing to a stone, without any scientific proof, "That is the fossil. A bone that has become stone".¹¹² The narrative of the novel draws a line between two different group of society within a single family, even between father and his children on the basis of their concepts about science and religion. Zahoor owns Amal for she is of the same views of her Nana but disowns his own children being different in opinion. For Zahoor, Amal is 'positive' while he calls his own children "Shadows" as if they are not real and 'Dents' as if they are not plain/solid. He tells Amal, "You know, Amal, you are more like me than either of my children are. Your mother and her brother are counterparts. Shadows! Dents! But you are a positive!"

Zahoor considers, not only his children as others but he also satirizes his own wife whom he calls the grandmother of Amal, without naming her. For him, "she was more ambitious than anyone... in the kitchen" only. And Amal calls her "a much better cook than Ama". The novel never gives any voice to the other group of society; rather it has been completely unvoiced, silenced and muted. They have never been mentioned even by their names rather they are always known through possessive pronouns 'my' 'your' and 'his' etc. Zahoor says to her grand-daughter, Amal, that it was he who named her "Amal" because 'amal' stand for the talent of doing.

The narrative shows the religious class of society or 'others' as ill-tempered, oblivious and eristic whereas, the 'moderate class' of society, on the other hand, is patient and cool,

¹¹² Ibid.

logical and sensible, and dialectic in nature. For example, when Amal learns the Urdu alphabet 'alif', Amal's Nana and Aba contradict each other's point of view. Nana states that "alif is for aql" but her Aba loses his temper and shows "his anger at Nana". He SHOUTS at his father-in-law and states, "Allah comes before intelligence! You are teaching her to put herself before Him! She will first use alif for Allah then for aql!" Amal states that "Aba was so upset he forgot his own spelling. Nana always meant the joke to be on him: aql begins with the twenty-fourth letter of the alphabet, ayin".¹¹³ The specific images like 'anger', 'shouted', and 'forgot' used for Amal's Aba and Nana's joking on him clearly gives the impression that Pakistani religious class loses its temper, argues illogically in eristic nature and forgets even what they know. Therefore, they are creatures to be joked on.

The narrative through the character, Zahoor, ridicules the religious Pakistani Society through ironic language rather than satirizing it with the intention to expose and highlight the follies and shortcomings in order to divert their attention to reform. As he states, "Pray five times a day and be a *real* Pakistani! Speak Urdu....."

The word '*real*' in italic shows the irony being made on the 'other' or 'stereotypical' class of society in Pakistan. For him, one who studies whales can be a real Pakistani only.¹¹⁴

The text of the novel expresses two different worlds almost on every page. For example, in the successive page, the mouthpiece of the novelist i.e. Amal describes the Nana's world, a world of moderate and liberal society, and the world of her mother, a religious and conservative class of Pakistani society, through an image of different kind of 'drinks'

¹¹³ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 6

¹¹⁴ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 6

which each class offers to their respective guests of their own worlds. Amal narrates a meeting of her Nana with Junayd, a moderate cum religious character and has just returned from Samarkand. The word “Samarkand” for Amal is a kind of beverage “Not the kind of drink Nana serves his friends” but “The kind Ama serves hers”. The text of the novel gives the impression that Nana’s drink offered to his guests is quite abominable for the religious group of the society.¹¹⁵

The narrative of the novel, on the part of liberal society, employs an approach of separation in terms of science and religion. It gives the impression that for liberal Pakistani society, science and religion are two different areas having no interaction with each other. When Junayd shows Zahoor a photograph of an observatory in Samarkand, he states that it was thought as the final “great achievement of Muslim scientists”.¹¹⁶ But Zahoor, in order to undermine and separate the role of religion, says “they were driven by an urge to learn about the world, not prove their faith”.¹¹⁷ Amal states that both of them “speak their own language”¹¹⁸ which gives the impression that religion and science have their own particular discourses and have nothing common between them. But, the creationist group of society has an approach of interaction between religion and science. As Junayd states that such observatories were built in order to worship “through a science of fixed moments”.¹¹⁹ For Junayd, “The true believer is oriented in space and scheduled in time”.¹²⁰ But Zahoor, a liberal palaeontologist and representative of a moderate Pakistani society boldly declares

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 7

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 7

¹²⁰ Ibid.

that he does not need “to be pointed in the right direction”¹²¹, and that the world is his Ka’ba. Amal’s statement that she is aware of Ka’ba, being “the House of God” but does not know “what the stars and fluid moments have to do with it”¹²² also describes an approach of separation on the part of liberal Pakistani society. In this way, the narrative of the novel establishes binary opposition in the shape of two different approaches, rather two different world views in terms of science and religion.

The novel also gives the impression that the binary opposition between liberal class of society and religious class develops a state of confusion which resultantly creates some other characters like Junayd who seems in-between. For instance, Junayd who, on one hand, is a friend of Zahoor; enjoys drinking with him; but on the other hand, he supports religion and religious obligations and rituals. As at an occasion he employs *ad hominem*, thus directly attacks Zahoor when opposing the idea of evolution of a goat into a whale and says, “It was becoming Zahoor. The man who never says Zoh’r”. He allusively and connotatively opposes the notion of evolution and denotatively rejects Zahoor’s dogmas in evolution.

The arguments regarding evolution and religion on the part of their respective supporters, creates a striking binary opposition in the novel. Zahoor is of the view that human beings have also “come from water but have not gone back”; and that the dog-whale “was developing underwater hearing. Its tail was getting bigger. It was going to lose its fur, drop its legs”. All this “was happening very slowly. Over millions of years”.¹²³ Junayd, on the other hand, opposes all these notions and argues, “A dog did not hop off a boat and

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid. p. 8

¹²³ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 13

gradually become a whale. One life does not spring from another, nor grow into it. Man was created on land”.¹²⁴ Both of them cite from the Holy Quran in their support. Zahoor quotes from the Holy Quran, “And We made out of water every living thing”¹²⁵ (و جعلنا من الماء كل شيء حي-) (هو الذى خلقكم من طين-) .¹²⁶ The counterpart, in his own support, also quotes from the Holy Quran, “He it is Who has created you out of clay”.

The above given references from the Holy Quran, quoted through characters by the novelist, give many impressions. On one hand, it shows that the Muslim society as a whole, whether the liberal or the orthodox, interpret and mould, the Holy Scriptures in order to gain their own desired goals. On the other hand, it also gives the impression that, God forbid, there is contradiction between above quoted references. Thus, the narrative of the novel lacks in developing any compatibility, rather it strikingly establishes binary opposition everywhere in the text.

Junayd states that “These are *divine* laws. You cannot corrupt them!”¹²⁷, thus attacks on Zahoor, a palaeontologist for corrupting the divine laws, which gives the impression that the scientists abrogate the Divine Laws, while Zahoor claims that divine laws cannot be known and enforced, which gives the impression that the non-secular class of the society enforce the divine laws which they are unable to comprehend.¹²⁸

The narrative of the novel describes that Amal’s Nana is busy in a kneeling position at the edge of the pit while others inside it, but at the same time, Junayd, a traditional

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. quoted from the translation of the Holy Quran by Abdullah Yousaf Ali (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1990. P. 13

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 13

¹²⁸ Ibid.

representative of religious class, is also described in a kneeling position, but offering his prayer, instead of working. This gives the impression that the conservative group of Pakistani society most often engage themselves in prayer when the others undertake laborious works.¹²⁹

Zahoor and others work until the sun dips. Amal is greatly tired. She has a bandage around her knee. Junayd tells her that “digging in the dirt for magic rocks, is no activity for girls”.¹³⁰ The narrative gives the impression that the creationists are against girls’ (women) working as palaeontologist, rather their sole job, according to them, is to look after kids, as Junayd suggests Amal that if she is forced by her Nana to do the same job, she should “at least bring a doll”. Furthermore, Junayd’s saying “digging in the dirt” is also very meaningful, which gives the impression that the conservative class of the society considers that looking for fossils in the rocks (theory of evolution) is a useless activity.

The theme of identity in terms of binary opposition is likewise prevalent within the family of Noman as well. The narrative of the novel gives Noman, apparently a representative of religious class but a prospective liberal and moderate individual, its identity through his own mouth but he seems unwilling to give even names (identity) to his own parents. The novelist through the character, Noman, employs words like ‘Aba’ and ‘Ama’ for Noman’s parents, and thus snatches their identity to be called them by their names.

The novel portrays Noman’s father as an indecent, uncultured, uncivilized, barbarous, careless a man, who does not know the manners how to sit; unaware of his surroundings and uses abusive language. Noman gives the description of his father sitting at the table for

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 21

¹³⁰ Ibid.

lunch in such a way that gives the impression that perhaps his sitting was against mannerism. He states, “stretching his legs under the table”¹³¹, he was nearly to crush one of a pet chicks of Sehr, Noman’s sister. The narrative cites an abusive language used by Noman’s father who says, “There was a bastard who came uninvited! He will face the music!”¹³², while talking about an important meeting. This gives the impression that the religious portion of Pakistani society is unaware of genteel and polite language.

Noman narrates that his mother “put an extra chapatti” on his “brother Adnan’s plate”.¹³³ This shows that the role of his mother is only of a cook and to serve the family. She is so much submissive to her husband that she warns her daughter Sehr with severe beating because she criticizes him, but according to the text of the novel, “pleads” her father that he himself watches Punjabi films of Anjuman. Noman’s mother says to Sehr, “If you argue with your father again, I’ll hit you”.¹³⁴ The impression is created that creationist class of Pakistan does not permit their children to speak anything against their parents’ follies. They suppress their children and snatch their freedom of thought, discussion and feelings.

Noman narrates that his ‘Aba’ took his sister Shaista “off her school’s hockey team last year”. It gives the impression that the conventional society is against girls’ taking part in sports and other co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. The novel narrates through Noman that his father is against science and is of the view that science is a foreign knowledge having nothing in common to his own culture and religion. He is against foreign films which he considers one of the means of foreign influences. Noman’s father states,

¹³¹ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 23

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

“These are dangerous times. The young Pakistani is a cultural freak! His religion is whimsy! We will save him from foreign influences – like science! Like films.”¹³⁵

The narrative of the text develops binary opposition in terms of evolutionism (science) and creationism (religion i.e. Islam). The novelist connotatively describes a certain conservative class by giving it the name of “party of Creation”, which allusively stands opposite to a party of evolution. The Party of creation admires and considers General Zia, a “Great man! Great thinker!”¹³⁶ The party tries to introduce such an educational system in Pakistan which is in conformity “with the spirit of Islam”. But Noman ironically says that he wonders “if this spirit has anything to do with..... al Jabra.”¹³⁷ It gives the impression that the educational system introduced during Zia’s regime was entirely against science.

The following pages of the narrative show the ‘Other’ (conservative) class of society as irresponsible and harum-scarum. The novelist through Amal, a character, severely criticizes Amal’s parents being responsible for the blindness of Mehwish and the death or perhaps miscarrying of IT (the third baby). “It (baby) left when learned what happened to Mehwish”¹³⁸, while describing the death of a new born baby as if s/he preferred death to live with such irresponsible parents is a sarcastic remark on the creationist class of Pakistani society. Amal’s saying that her “father was at the quarry”¹³⁹; that her mother was resting or vomiting; and that Mehwish was on the mercy of the ayah who is “cavorting with local suitors”¹⁴⁰ generates the impression that all the three were ignorant of their

¹³⁵ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 23

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 25

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

responsibilities. The novel portrays that Amal's parents are so inept and irresponsible that they move Mehwish to Amal's room and this eight years baby, Amal, is now to look after the blind baby.

The narrative of the novel establishes binary opposition between faith and reason; fate/coincidence and cause/effect. The novelist gives the impression that the non-secular class of Pakistani society adheres every happening to faith and fate. Amal's father, the representative of this class, argues that Mehwish was not blinded due to someone's carelessness but it was a matter of fate and coincidence, as he states, "she was not blinded by man. She was blinded by God".¹⁴¹ 'Chote Phoopu' another figure of the same class frowns with displeasure that "it is pointless looking for a cause".¹⁴² But, on the other hand, Amal and her Nana relate this incident to cause-and-effect with their own reasoning and seem uncomprehending and unbelieving the role of fate/coincidence and faith etc. Zahoor's remarks, "Maybe she crawled into one of your husband's workshop and a piece of rock flew into her socket"¹⁴³, "Next you will say God was taking your sins out on her"¹⁴⁴ and Amal's sayings, "Why did He decide what He made wasn't -?"¹⁴⁵, "Did God make a mistake?"¹⁴⁶ are ample examples through which a moderate, rather secular class of Pakistani society has been portrayed. The narrative of the novel gives the impression that the fate/coincidence has no concern with cause/effect, which shows an approach of separation on the part of novelist.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 25

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 27

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

The theme of secularism and fundamentalism in terms of binary opposition can be seen when a new character, Farzana, is introduced. Farzana lives in Lahore and has come to Islamabad now. She is well-versed in the Holy Qur'an. She and Amal's mother recites the Holy Qur'an together, mostly the chapter *Yasin*. The narrator describes that whenever Amal is called by her mother and Farzana, she begins to give "Mehwish a bath". It gives the impression how Amal, a representative of young secular Pakistani generation, tries to avoid reciting the Holy Qur'an. Not only this, rather she remarks that the chapter (*yasin*) is considered "to help say goodbye to the dead",¹⁴⁷ and that there have been no deaths in her family since "Ama lost her unborn child three years ago".¹⁴⁸ On one hand, through the words of Amal, the conservative class of Pakistani society is portrayed as reciting the Holy Qur'an for such purposes as given in the narrative, and on other hand, it gives the impression how the secular class is moving away from the basic and primary Islamic source i.e. the Holy Qur'an.

The novel portrays the religious class as barbarous and ugly, contrary to the moderate class which is meek and clean. When Amal slaps Mehwish in the bathroom, the latter begins to scream. Amal's mother opens the door and "grabs Mehwish hand, with the paint flake dug so deep into the nail the skin has cut. A fine line of blood drips halfway down her finger."¹⁴⁹ Amal states, "It's hardly anything, ' I say, rinsing the nail."¹⁵⁰ The narrative seems to be a satire on Muslims who theoretically believe that "cleanliness is half a faith"¹⁵¹ (a hadith) but in their practical matters they seem to be quite otherwise. The motif of the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 31

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 34

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Waheed Uz Zaman trans. *Sahi Muslim Sharif, Vol 1* (Hadith No. 534), Lahore: Khalid Ihsan Publishers, 2004. p. 353

discourse seems to be duality or binary opposition in every chapter. Let's have a look on the next section, *Gateway the Second: The Man*, of the novel in terms of binary opposition created through the words of the novel in Pakistani society.

4.5 Gateway the Second: The Man

This section gives the impression that Pakistani society is divided not only into two different classes but in duality within a single character. For example, Noman, an important character, on one hand, has close affiliation with the party of creation of which his father is a Vice Chairman to whom Noman is a Personal Secretary, but on the other hand, he has friendship with Salman who is a Marxist. He in real sense is a 'cultural freak'. On one hand, he wants to be attached with the fundamental religious class of Pakistani society, but on the other, his criticism on Islam reaches at climax when he critiques Islamic architecture like Taj-Mahal, when he states, "I want to be the part of a We that envisions and erects the sexiest tomb on the planet".¹⁵² At another occasion, he explicitly criticizes the three tomes of 'Badshahi Mosque' which he compares to the 'buxom' of women.¹⁵³ The phraseology of the novel 'envisions', 'erects' 'sexiest tomb' and 'buxom' etc. is very meaningful and is a severe criticism on Islamic architecture and even the worship places of Muslims.

Noman is such a character who hangs in balance. He calls Salman and others who lives in '*Androoni Shehr*' (the Inner City) as 'Real People', but calls himself 'Less Real'. It is perhaps because of two reasons: Firstly, that he lives in the outskirts while his friend lives in the center of the city; secondly rather the most suitably that he belongs to a conservative class of society where he cannot enjoy the society of secular and communist friends like

¹⁵² Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 31

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 105

Salman to openly enjoy whiskey, hashish and revels the company of girls like Ann with them, thus he terms himself as 'Less Real'. This shows how gravely the Pakistani society is victim of external as well as internal conflict.

The novel portrays Noman's father, the Vice President of 'Jammat-e-Pedaish (Party of Creation) as an archetype of ill-natured creationist class. Whenever he discusses Darwin or the people who believe in evolution, he begins to call them names. He makes use of abusive words and phrases such 'Darvin bhainchod', 'That bhainchod Zahoor' etc. which creates the impression that the religious minded people of Pakistani society is opprobrious, ignominious, scurrilous, and indecent in nature. While the secular class, though oppose the religious society but never ever employs vulgar language, rather they always speak logically, reasonably and in a decent manner.

At one point, the novel portrays that the ambassador of evolution i.e. Zahoor is unsuccessful in convincing the audience about the theory of evolution. The audience is divided and most of them leave soon after listening Pascal, the French philosopher and then Zahoor. Noman who has been appointed by his father to copy Zahoor's speech and to report, has written nothing for he (Zahoor) couldn't convince the audience and there was nothing special to report. Noman concludes that Zahoor was not a threat at all for he was not supported by the audience but his father wants to see him his enemy by any cost. As Noman states, "The truth is, hardly any one attended Zahoor's talk, and those who came, left divided".¹⁵⁴ He states at another occasion, "Zahoor is no contest and I took no notes".¹⁵⁵ But as soon he returns from Seminar Room 2 where Zahoor was delivering his lecture to

¹⁵⁴ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 87

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Seminar Room 1 where the non-secular group has gathered, he is asked by his father and the others to describe immediately what he has written.

On the other hand, Noman who is so confused and befuddled does not know what to say. He states, 'The whole room is glaring at me. My stomach hurts. The room starts to spin'. But he knows his father's temperament and lies that there were 'at least four hundred people', though they were not more than forty or fifty. He tells his father and the other members of the Party of Creation that Mr. Zahoor has smeared 'layers of falsehood' over the eyes of the innocent people and that he is looked upon as their leader. Noman's father lauds him for his (false) reporting. Thus the text gives the impression that the issues like evolution, which do not pose any serious threat to the Pakistani society, for having no support among the audience, has been made issues only because of the rigid and stubborn attitude on the part of conservative class of society.

The portrayal of the novel shows binary opposition between the old and the young people of religious Pakistani society within the same group from the perspective of science and religion. It portrays that the old people are entirely against science and scientific approach while the young religious lot accepts science and its approaches. For example, when Zahoor talks about 'earth sciences', a chapter included in F. Sc. Book, which he holds up, says that the earth is dead; it is Allah Who 'breathes life into it' and stops 'breathing life into it, 'according to His will. Say: He is the only cause'. He states that despite all these truth, 'the young these days have no manners and must be harnessed'.

But at this point an insignificant, the youngest boy in the seminar, stands up and requests for saying something. When he is allowed, he after thanking them for providing him a chance to speak, states that the Qur'an unlike Bible does not specify the age of earth; and

that in the light of the evidence of the astrologists the age of earth is calculated 'approximately five thousand million years old exactly'. He further adds that the Holy Qur'an approves and praises this knowledge in Surah Al-Fatir: "In the mountains there are streaks of white and red of various shades, as well as others raven-black..... Only such are endowed with innate knowledge stand truly in awe of God: for they alone comprehend that verily, God is almighty, much forgiving." The youngest boy suggests that the 'innate knowledge' discussed in the Holy Qur'an might be the 'earth science' which helps in knowing the mountains of many shades in Salt Range of Punjab. But the boy is silenced by asking him 'to refrain from further offense'. Noman's father further remarks, that the young are 'not in a position to lecture' them on the 'Holy Word'. This shows a conflict within the same class i.e. the old and young religious class of Pakistani society.

Noman accompanies his father around the globe to attend seminars as his personal secretary. He really does not want to be with him rather wishes to teach mathematics at a school for 'eight thousand rupees a month' where he may earn as thrice 'with private tuition' but is compelled by his father to follow the way mapped out by his father. The text generates the impression that he cannot even express his wish of teaching to his father. Thus, the text portrays how radical and strict the religious class of Pakistani society is in nature, which never permits their children to lead their lives according to their own free will and wish.

The novel severely criticizes the religious portion of the society which is victim of internal conflict. The outward of this class of society is quite opposite to its inward. For example, in a hotel where Noman stays at a tour with his father, states that everything, the food, the labourer, tarmac and wheel is imported. Noman mentions a beer which was offered to him

by Sheikh Abu Bin Yaqyb, a scholar from Saudi Arabia. It gives the impression that on one hand, creationist class of society talks of Islamization of the society while on the other enjoys and offers beer to others.

The novel most often portrays the creationists engaging themselves in proving the science wrong. For this purpose, Noman is given different tasks and activities to meet their needs. For example, once he is given an assignment to exclude the names of all the scientists from the book of science. Furthermore, he is instructed to prove the laws of science as false by employing verses from the Holy Qur'an. For this purpose, he must keep in mind that 'everything is Already Known'¹⁵⁶, therefore the possibility of any discovery is unreasonable.

Noman is so confused of this approach of the radical society, particularly of his father that at a point he asks himself, whether he misrepresents the God? And then decides not to represent anyone, neither God, nor his father and even not his own self. But the confused Noman who has a hamlet inside him, tries to design his future plan about following his father instructions or otherwise? He decides that he will stay for an hour on the roof. During this time, if his neighbor, Unsa, 'shows up on the roof' he will take this as a sign to assign that night for rewriting the holy minutes or blueprints. But if she does not come on the roof, he will start a new year with a new plan.¹⁵⁷ This shows what sort of conflict he is victim of that he is unable to decide about.

The text of the novel depicts that his neighbor, Unsa shows herself on the roof, and he therefore goes downstairs and selects seven different verses from the holy Qur'an to show

¹⁵⁶ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p.110

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

the religious Pakistani society as fundamental. These verses are discussed one by one in the following:-

- a. *“Art thou not aware that it is God who has made subservient to you that is on the earth, and the ships that sail through the sea at His behest.”¹⁵⁸ (22:65)*

In terms of above given reference, the description of the novel develops the approach of religious people, that whether the ships float or sink it is entirely according to the law of God. There is no use of the principle of Archimedes. In fact the religious society is of the opinion that this natural law is the creation of God for nature is the Work of God, therefore the ships float or sink, according to His law and thus Archimedes’s principle has no meaning for them. The fundamentalism shown on the part of religious society is the negation of scientific notion or the principle discovered by Archimedes.

Another reference selected from the Holy Qur’an by the novelist is from the same surah or chapter of the Qur’an, given below:

- b. *“It is He who holds the celestial bodies in their orbits, so that they may not fall upon the earth otherwise than by his leave.”¹⁵⁹ (22:65)*

The non-libral group of society has been engaged in an illogical discussion through the narrative by making an analogy of celestial bodies like sun, moon and stars which are millions miles away from the range of gravitational force, with the apples attached to the trees just a few meters above the earth. Through this analogy, the religious Pakistani class is shown as negating the scientific principle of gravity discovered by Newton.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 111

¹⁵⁹ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 111

c. *And all the beauty of many hues which He has created for you on earth: in this, behold, there is a message for people who are willing to take it to heart.*"¹⁶⁰ (16:13)

In the similar manner, the creationist class of society is portrayed as they believe that different colors are conceived or unseen only according to the will of God; and that it has no concern with Newton's notion of wavelength.

d. *"Think of the Day when a violent convulsion will convulse the world to be followed by further convulsions."*¹⁶¹ (79:6)

The portrayal of the novel employs the above given verses from the Holy Qur'an in the sense of releasing and storing energy. Whereas the exegetes translate and interpret these verses in sense of death with its aching. But the text relates the verses with the radical approach of muslim society that, according to impression created through the words, refutes 'Einstein and his so-called relativity'.

e. *"And God sends down water from the skies, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless: in this, behold, there is a message indeed for people who are willing to listen."*¹⁶² (16:65)

The antievolutionist Pakistani society, through Noman, the Personal Secretary to the Vice Chairman of the Party of Creation, is shown fundamental, thus negates all principles of meteorology, particularly Howard's notions about meteorology.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 111

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 112.

- f. *“He creates whatever He will: He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills.”*¹⁶³ (42:49)

The conservative society is depicted as fundamental on account of the belief that it is God who gives male/female babies or both/none and that this class of Pakistani society negates the scientific process expressed by Gregor Mendel.

- g. *“Have you ever considered that seed which you emit? Is it you who create it? – or are We the source of its creation?”* (56:58)

Again, the narrative of the novel creates binary opposition between the religious and secular Pakistani societies. The narrative gives the impression that religious minded people of society negates the Theory of Evolution and the evolutionists, being creationists on the basis of their belief in God as the Creator. The text of the novel depicts that the creationists or the religious class of Pakistani society illogically refutes the scientific notions and approaches by employing characters like Noman who is hired and does not willingly work rather he is an archetype, thus represents the bewildered and perplexed people of Pakistani society in the novel.

The novel describes that the young generation is badly affected by this opposition between the groups of the society. Noman states that their giving power to themselves have put the ‘youth on trial’. Once he meets Zahoor and openly declares that in Public he argues for his father but in private he argues for him. He states; “I’ve been batting for both sides”.¹⁶⁴ He is so perplexed that he tells in an overt manner, “Now I want to bat for neither. I don’t want

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 125.

to be in any game".¹⁶⁵ This shows the internal conflict in the youth of Pakistani society, which has vividly been brought forth by two opposing approaches of religious and secular classes of Pakistani society. Noman's saying that in 'public' he supports a religious person/creationist, his father, but in 'private' he supports a palaeontologist/evolutionist, Zahoor, gives the impression how Pakistani youth are suppressed by the theological class of society, who otherwise have a tendency towards liberalism, secularism and evolutionism.

4.6 Gateway the Third: The Word

The conflict between Islam and science is seen in the educational institutions of Pakistan. Two different approaches of teachers may be observed through the characters like Miss Fouzia and Miss Amna. The former is strongly against 'drawing and writing for fun' while the other thinks it otherwise. Mehwish narrates that once she was slapped for drawing by Miss Fauzia who told her that "the Prophet said those who are punished most by God are the makers of figures."¹⁶⁶ By this, the novel gives the impression how radical Miss Fauzia, an archetype of teachers, is. While on the other hand, Miss Amna with whom Mehwish shares this account, consoles her that the Prophet's saying has been 'spoken out of context' (context). Miss Amna adds that generally the people wrongly make use of the saying of the Prophet to make authentic their own unimportant ideas.¹⁶⁷ This gives the impression that most of the people who show themselves as religious do not know the actual spirit of religion, Islam.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 149

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

The whole story of the novel revolves around the conflict between religion and science. Almost every theme of the narrative is associated with the conflict. For example, an observable theme is that of the element of insecurity. Zahoor has severe security threats to his credit. He is a government servant, a professor, but still his person is at stake. He is advised by his friend Junayd to be careful, though he never keeps a guard. Mehwish narrates that "Noman's father does not like Nana".¹⁶⁸ Rather he has received serious threats from Noman's father. The text of the novel gives the impression that the believing religious Pakistani is acutely extremists in nature owing to this conflict.

The novel portrays that the conflict has dissected the society at family level. The members of a family behave differently, observe their rituals differently, get up and go to bed at different time and above all think and meditate differently rather incisively opposite under a single roof. For example, when Mehwish gets up in time for 'sehri' she hears her mother in kitchen. She hears her Nana, Zahoor also, but not for 'sehri' rather looking for 'Eid'.¹⁶⁹ He does not observe fast, though he does not take tea in front of Mehwish's Ama when she 'offers him tea',¹⁷⁰ perhaps because she strictly observes 'roza' (fast). But it is noted that Amal, who has come of her age, still sleeps and gets up when the sun rises. Later, at day time Mehwish and Zahoor enjoy their "lunch alone big cause (because) Ama is fasting."¹⁷¹ Not only this, he is so liberal a person that he listens to Iqbal Bano's ghazals and hums along in the holy month of Ramazan.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 149

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 151

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 155

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 160

¹⁷² Ibid.

The conflict is so observable that Zahoor, the archetype of secular class of Pakistani society, clearly admits that he is a “liberal man who does not need to go around giving speeches about how liberal”¹⁷³, he is. He is liberal to such an extent that he overtly declares that he will not marry off his daughter (grand-daughter, Amal). He states that he will “let her study use less (useless) things if she wants”; that he will never “force her to fast”. He declares that “Let her sleep all day!”¹⁷⁴

The novel depicts conflict between the two opposing group. The narrative of the novel portrays that the religious class is strictly adhered to religious rituals, but the irony of situation is that most of the people do not understand about them. For example, Mehwish narrates rather satirizes Miss Fouzia by saying that she “re sights (recites) the Quran she speaks in the voice but no one under stands (understands).”¹⁷⁵

The novel points to another conflict which does not lie between the secular and religious groups rather it is an internal conflict within the religious class about moon sighting and celebrating Eid. This conflict provides a chance to the liberal rather the secular class to propagate their criticism even more bitter. For example, when Mehwish asks her Nana, Zahoor, about ‘Eid’ whether it will be celebrated tomorrow or not; she is told that “We sell brit (celebrate) Eid when the mullahs say so. Their Moon Sighting Commit Tea (committee) goes off in a plane in search of the crip tick (cryptic) sat light (satellite).”¹⁷⁶ He further comments that “Pakistan will be split on Eid. Some will eat tomorrow others will be made to wait, hungry for a better real newer moon.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Ibid. 154

¹⁷⁴ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 154

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 158

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 159

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

The evolutionist group seeks evolution in every aspect of life. Mehwish's slowly evolved use of misspelled words throughout the novel gives the impression of evolution. Furthermore, Amal's saying that "A language is like a whale it comes from something else. Urdu from Persian, Hindi and Arabic."¹⁷⁸ This is vivid indication to Darwin's theory of evolution on the part of Amal, a representative of evolutionist group of Pakistani society.

The narrative of the novel points to another conflict from the perspective of Pakistan's foreign policy. The text gives the impression that the Westerns have always used Pakistan for their own interests. For example, Pakistan's role and participation in Russian-Afghan's war has always been a matter of conflict for the citizens of Pakistan. The novel overtly expresses that now when the 'communists are dead' and the 'JP's kitty is drying' the "International experts decide Pakistan can have its experiment with democracy."¹⁷⁹ It implicitly refers to Zia Ul Haq's dictatorial regime which was acceptable to the International Community, particularly to the Western World in the cold war, but now the role of everybody is over. Therefore, Pakistan must follow the following policy charted out by the 'International Experts':

Islamic laws bad.

Nuclear democracies good.

Nuclear democracies in Pakistan bad.

Female Secretary-General in the UN bad.

Female President in the US bad.

¹⁷⁸ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 165

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 170

Female Prime Minister in Pakistan good.

First female head of a Muslim State, elected twice, very very good!¹⁸⁰

The narrative of the novel severely criticizes the Prime Minister whose regime is duly accepted to Western World; and who states, “I am against Islamic laws and Islamic laws are against me. I love you. Can I have my fighter planes? Please get rid of my rivals. I did pay for them – I mean the F-16s. For a second Pakistan flickers back to life.”¹⁸¹

The two different classes of Pakistani society i.e. religious and secular have different political ideologies about the creation of Pakistan. They even have contradictory views about the founder, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, of Pakistan. The seculars are of the view that the Quaid wanted a secular state but the other opines that he wanted Sharia. Both have their own proof in the form of Quaid’s speeches. Noman’s father once assigns him (Noman) the task to prove that Quaid wanted an Islamic state and that the speech about creation of a secular state has no existence. Now, with the change of regime, it is suggested that Quaid’s speeches be taken again to the lab.

The novel portrays that the conflict between secularism and conservatism is so deeply rooted in the society that it has created a gulf even between the youngsters and their parents. This has caused a generational gap throughout the entire society of Pakistan. The parents try their utmost to harness their children who do not accept any piece of advice as remedy on their parents’ part. For example, Mehwish narrates that her mother asks “Apa Farzana how to put Amal on the True Path”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 170

¹⁸² Ibid. p. 173

The novel depicts the religious class as vindictive and crosses all limits of rivalry by accusing Zahoor for the act of blasphemy who is arrested and is in the custody of police. He is charged with the notion that all things being accidentally came into existence; that he calls himself a prophet; gathers a huge army; and that he has written the names of the four caliphs under his feet. The text of the novel seems to give the impression that Zahoor is wrongly declared as blasphemous; and that he is teased by putting him in cell that 'stinks'; where there is 'No toilet' and he is taken four times a day to a pit; where there is 'No fan', 'No window', 'No light' thus he utters, "How will I read" which gives the impression that even in such a critical situation, he desires to read.

4.7 Gateway the Fourth: The Love

This chapter of the novel, though essentially includes erotic material, also throws light on two opposing attitudes based on secular and religious fundamentalism. The secular class is entirely against Taliban government in Afghanistan and favours Russia. For example, Ali, one of Noman's friend states, 'Roos were great' and the Taliban are emphasizing only on ta'zeer (capital punishment) and tihara (cleanliness), purity and punishment. They never say something about 'dope'.¹⁸³ Noman is too against Taliban that he even calls them 'bhainchod',¹⁸⁴ while his own father is Vice President of the Party of Creation and plays an important role in Afghan war. This ideological conflict is shown how gravely the Pakistani society is divided into opposite fractions.

The conflict between religious and radical views and practices may be observed in the case of Noman and his family. The family has a contradictory workaday life. For example, on

¹⁸³ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 232

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

one hand Noman's mother gets up 'before Fajr prayers' when it is still night. She makes her ablution and offers her prayer. She intentionally leaves the door open of the bed room, while making ablution in the bath room, so that the rest of the family members, Noman and his sisters etc. may wake up on hearing the splashes of the water. But on the other hand, Noman who awakes but does not gets up except leaning 'across a table' and pinching his sister's cheek, telling her to 'Go back to sleep.'¹⁸⁵ The text of the novel gives here, an impression of change in approaches towards religious rituals on the part of old and youngsters of Pakistani society.

The narrative of the novel depicts that everyone employs knowledge to support his/her own point of view. For example, when Noman states that he is 'going to tell children about Al-Khwarizmi and the magic zero',¹⁸⁶ his mother tells him that whether he has ever thought about the importance of number. She asks him whether he 'believes that praying alone bring twenty seven times less reward than praying in congregation.'¹⁸⁷ But Noman has his own world and tries to convince his mother to listen to him. He wants to teach but his mother attempts to win over him not to argue with his father; to take care of him; and to continue working with him till he lets him go.¹⁸⁸ This gives the impression that the young Pakistanis cannot materialize their own will and wish to propagate their own radical ideas due to the strict parental control which makes them rebellious in the eyes of their parents.

¹⁸⁵ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 238

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 240

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

The conflict between religion (Islam) and science may be observed when Zahoor is declared blasphemous. Five people file an 'FIR' against him. On the day of hearing a mob is standing outside. Each group has its own supporters. The supporters of Zahoor, an archetype of evolutionists, who are a few in number, hold placards like 'No More False Arrests', 'Amend The Sham Law', 'Faith Is Private', 'Proof Is Public: Where Is It?'.¹⁸⁹ But on the other side, the religious fundamentalists call him 'Heretic Pig'. Even one of them spits on Amal's mother. The people are of the view that if he is not a heretic, he must not 'argue against legislating faith.' They have different questions in their minds and want Zahoor to publicly declare that 'he is a believer.'¹⁹⁰ But Amal's mother thinks that he will never, for 'he is stubborn'. This shows the obstinate attitude on the part of both the secular as well as religious groups of Pakistani society.

The narrative of the novel portrays that the conflict is not limited to the locals only rather it is aired at international level. Zahoor, the palaeontologist, is mostly supported by the foreigners. At international level, the writers begin to write articles in newspapers; rather 'a fan in Sweden wants to write a book on him.' But most of his near and dear ones have turned against him. No one comes to meet or see him rather they 'walk around him as if he carries a germ.'¹⁹¹ Even his own son, who lives in Paris, writes him a letter of contempt. His son writes to him, "We need you to represent us, to show the world the pure face of our motherland, not make us look bad. How am I to live here with your dishonour?"¹⁹² The text gives the impression that on one hand, the majority of Pakistani abhors him on account

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 244

¹⁹⁰ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p.244

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p. 257

¹⁹² Ibid.

of blasphemy which he is accused with, but on the other, the strangers (foreigners) fully support him in this conflict in order to impose their own set agenda.

The novel portrays that the conflict reaches at climax when Zahoor is released being declared innocent by the court. But on the very second day, one of his guards is missing and the other murdered. The killers have left a note '*jaise ap ko pata hai*' (as you know). The guard of the judge who released him is also murdered. Again there is a note '*jaise ap ne dekha hai*' (as you've seen). These news create such a panic that the judge leaves the country. After a few days more, rather within a week, the guard of the lawyer of Zahoor is also assassinated and the killers leave a note: '*jaise ap ne suna hai*' (as you have heard). This time, the lawyer leaves the country for his own life which is also at stake. Zahoor is advised by his supporters to leave the country but he is not willing. Instead he is taken by Junayd, his loyal friend to a secret place. The narrative of the text gives the impression that the religious Pakistani class is extremely fundamentalist which kill the innocent people who by any means are not involved in the activities of Zahoor, the palaeontologist and archetype of evolutionists.

4.8 Gateway the Fifth: The Afterlife

The conflict between two different approaches i.e. secular and religious-fundamental moves forwards and seems to be tentatively ended on the death of Zahoor, his son, and Junayd while many others like Amal, Mehwish, and Noman seriously injured, on account of being targeted by three hired security guards. The text of the novel portrays that the religious fundamentalist class is so brutal that Zahoor, the palaeontologist and the others

are targeted at the happy occasion of Amal's marriage to Omar. Instead of her wedding bed she finds herself in hospital where she does not want to be. She finds her sister, 'Mehwish still unconscious'; Noman, so serious that 'he might die'; her 'Nana (Zahoor) also might'; while 'Junayd definitely'; whereas Munir Mamu has already died.¹⁹³

However, it is significantly crucial to note that the killers have been totally unvoiced by the text of the novel. The narrative provides every minute detail about the weapon and bullets, used in this barbarous attack on the secular class by the attackers; but what happened to them and to the people who were behind this malicious act has been left entirely untouched. The discourse of the novel at this point has made the religious fundamental class as subaltern, who cannot speak at this stage of the novel. Rather even before this brutality on the part of extremists, the killers of the guards of Zahoor, the judge and of the lawyers have not been given voice in order to justify their ferociousness.

The text of the novel depicts that the oppressed secular class suffer from this traumatic event for a long time. Perhaps the event happens in November, but Noman is released in January while Zahoor and Junayd are still hospitalized. And then, at last, Junayd dies in the month of April while Zahoor is still alive later on discharged from the hospital. The narrative seems to give the impression that the oppressor conservatives snatched everything from the oppressed class. For example, Amal states that her father "sells Nana's house in Islamabad and Nana moves in with his only surviving child, my mother."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 297

¹⁹⁴ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 303

The narrative of the novel provides allusions that the attack was undertaken by the Party of Creation or at least the killers were hired by the Party. For example, one of the guards 'carried an American assault rifle'¹⁹⁵

The last chapter of the novel mostly and essentially portrays the conflict between liberalism and conservatism. For example, Amal wants to go with a group of male scientists to Margala hills for searching fossils. Her in-laws are strongly against her going on digging "alone, with so many men."¹⁹⁶ Her husband, Omar neither stops nor defends her. Omar's mother strongly opposes girls' free company with unlawful men, vividly an Islamic thinking. She states that "it's shameful when girls are free with men"¹⁹⁷, but her husband, Omar 'says nothing.'¹⁹⁸

Amal, perhaps would have given up thinking to go to the hills, if her Nana, Zahoor had not asked her, 'bring me back something I'll want to see.' Thus she decides to go and telephones Omar before she leaves. Omar's mother also telephones her son and poses him so many questions and suggestion: "How can you let her go?" "What man would allow that?" "Catch her!" But Omar apologizes to his mother and says that he will see the matter next time; and begins to flirt with his wife, Amal on telephone.¹⁹⁹ The discourse of the novel gives the impression that the young Pakistani generation is hard to harness. It also depicts that the Pakistani social or family system in which generally the mother-in-law

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 300

¹⁹⁶ Uzma, Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 304

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 305

dominates, is going other way, as in the case of this novel, it might be observed that the daughter-in-law dominates her mother-in-law and leaves alone for fourteen days with a group of people who have no blood relation with her.

The text of the novel depicts that it is really very difficult for women to work with male members in Pakistani society. When Amal reaches to the hills along with a cluster of men like Abdul, Fawad, Kazuo, Ibrar, Henry, Malik Sahib, the cook Ghafoor etc. she indeed has to remain in a separate tent. She has a lot of problems to materialize her dreams of being a palaeontologist, because of the social and religious norms and traditions of Pakistani society. She is even full bladder and thinks hundred times how to pass all the male members to have a pee; that someone may observe her or sneak her up behind. But then she calms while addressing herself, “You’re the first woman in the country to do this, you know. There’s only one other woman palaeontologist, and her family won’t allow her on overnight digs. You’re the first.”²⁰⁰

The novel portrays that it is really very difficult in an Islamic country like Pakistan for a female palaeontologist to work in the field, particularly when she is without a legal male escort like father, brother, husband etc. For instance, on the fourth day of their stay when the group of palaeontologist stays in a village, Abdul leave Amal outside the women’s quarters. Inside the quarter, Amal is asked by a young woman, “Which one is your husband?” In order to conceal her position and avoid the societal constrains she replies

²⁰⁰ Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 308

'Omar' without telling her that she is among unlawful men and that her husband is not with her.²⁰¹

The narrative of the novel describes that the group of palaeontologists successfully returns by finding a spiral tooth which is fused to an upper jaw, some peculiar horns; two other small teeth; and the left ear this time. This finding is called '*Cornucetus*' by the group of scientists. But when Amal reaches home, she comes to know that her husband has died this morning. She addresses the corpse of her Nana and says, "I've brought back something to show you, as promised."²⁰² She hears a reply, "What does it matter if you come from water or soil when you don't decide which you become?"²⁰³

This gives the impression that the Pakistani society is divided regarding their perception about science and scientific approaches. The reason is that Islam provides certain moral laws whereas science does not discuss about morality; therefore a tension between science and Islam arises which is differently perceived by Pakistani society. The religious class thinks that science and scientific approaches are threats to the moralities of Islam, while the scientists consider them conservative, fundamentalists and extremists. This conflict between Islam and science is thus the central theme rather the thesis statement of the novel, *The Geometry of God* of Uzma Aslam Khan.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 310

²⁰² Uzma Aslam Khan. *The Geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2008. p. 316

²⁰³ Ibid.

4.9 Conclusion:

In the light of analysis and discussion of the novel *The Geometry of God*, it may be concluded that the novelist has mainly focused and projected the existing and emerging conflict between Islam and Science in Pakistani society. The entire narrative of the novel whether, it is a generation gap; issues of morality; imminent threats and security hazard; issues of cold war and then war of terror; target killing; parental care, nurturing and control, education system; political system etc., all revolve around the central theme i.e. the conflict between Islam and Science projected by the novelist in her work of international calibre. The text of the novel has been projected through the binary opposition like liberalism and fundamentalism; enlightenment and conservatism; secularism and religious extremism primarily in the light of the theory of evolutionism and religious belief of creationism. But the fact remains that the novelist has unvoiced the religious class which does not have their own tongue to speak rather they have been represented by the characters like Amal, Mehwish and Noman who narrate the entire account in first person pronoun. The above given characters are the ambassadors of enlightenment and modernity. All the three are partially rebellious in terms of their association with their parents. They never introduce their parents by their names rather call them my 'Aba', 'Ama' or 'Ami'. Noman, though initially work for his father who is Vice Chairman of the Party of Creation, but entirely turns against his father due to his so-called religious activities. This deviance on the part of Noman is so severe that he begins to live separately in a hired room.

On the other hand, Amal and Mehwish are happier to live with their grandfather (Nana) Zahoor, a palaeontologist, than their religious-minded parents. Amal's grandfather proves to be an enlightened and moderate man who permits Amal to do whatever she wants. He is aware of her affair with Omar but never forbids her; but her parents come to know through Mehwish, and thereby they strongly scold her and disallow her to meet him anymore. However, she follows such a liberal path that she crosses all limits of morality and engages in immoral activities with her boyfriend Omar with whom she lastly get married.

The novel is divided into semi-religious gateways: The World; The Man; The Word; The Love; and The Afterlife. The chapters portray the modern and enlightened Pakistani society displaced in the fluctuating ideologies of the Islamic state of Pakistan. An important character of the novel, Noman, under a manipulating father steers his life in search of Truth. He is told by his father to pluck verses from the Holy Qur'an so that to prove Zahoor, a professor, wrong rather infidel for his propagation and belief in the theory of evolution. But he ends up with the Party of Creation and even his parents and joins Zahoor whom he considers anything but un-Islamic.

The novel portrays that the Pakistani society is divided into two different classes: the Creationists and the Evolutionists, due to the dictatorial regime of Zia Ul Haq. His Policy of Islamization in Pakistan and prohibition of evolution has created a gulf between religion and science and thus it promoted religious extremism in the country. The novel portrays that the evolutionists have been wrongly accused and imprisoned. As in the case of Zahoor,

who is accused of heresy or blasphemy and put into prison. When Zahoor is released by the court, the religious fundamentalists assassinate his guards along with the guards of his lawyer and of the judge also. On account of this extremism, the lawyer and judge leave the country. Zahoor is also advised to leave the country but he doesn't. However, he is taken to secret place by Junayd. The religious fundamentalists, however, are in search of him and finally target him on the occasion of the marriage of his grand-daughter Amal.

The narrative of the novel severely criticizes Zia's policy of funding 'Mooj' (Mujahideen) with American dollars against Russia. The novelist is of the view that this wrong policy has deteriorated the peaceful atmosphere of the country and paved the way for fundamentalism, extremism, and weaponization of the country. However, on the other hand, the narrative vividly includes immoral language, carnal activities on the part of secular class of Pakistani society. This shows that both the classes are on their respective extremes.

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