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Depiction of Muslims' Identity in *The Blind Man's Garden* with Special Focus on Mikal

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Abstract

*September 11, 2001 is a dark day in the modern history of Muslims because they were projected as terrorists and extremist soon after the violent attacks in the United States on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the US military headquarters. These events catalyzed violence around the world by both nation-states and non-state actors. These events have been widely interpreted as pivoting on issues related to religious identities. Subsequently, several novels have been published that have given attention to these identities. A number of which have been produced by writers particularly associated with Pakistan, the world's fifth most populous nation. The present article provides a dramatic analysis of the personae created in *The Blind Man's Garden* to highlight the ways in which contemporary fiction depict specific kind of images about Muslim identity. It also studied how this novel constitutes assumptions about Muslim identity. Mostly, this novel portrays violent Muslim identity. After reading this novel one can feel the absence of representations of peaceful, devout, pragmatic Muslims within Pakistan. It showed how, regardless of the ways in which the motivations of characters are portrayed, Islam is associated with violence through scenic means, even though the representations of violence portrayed in these religious scenes typically violate Islamic doctrine and the history of the true followers of Islam.*

Keywords: *extremists, catalyzed, violence, Subsequently, Blind Man's*

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Background to the Present Study

Identity is a crucial aspect of human life. It plays a very important role in determining one's individual as well as collective position and status (Day et al., 2006). Without proper identity one loses one's place and meaning in society (Libri, 2017). Therefore, the researcher can say that the assertion of proper and acceptable identity has been among the major aims of human practices across history. Pratt (2005) describes the significance of identity in this way: "Identities—whether based on class, gender, religion, nationality or some other social/cultural marker—play a role in building social movements and 'framing contention'" (p.1). It is not surprising that identity and its different forms and aspects are depicted and portrayed in a number of art form. Literature is a strong means of identity assertion. Therefore, literary writers like poets and novelists have taken up the issue of identity in detail and at length. Novel is a literary form that provides with enough space to construct an identity a literary writer wishes for. Religious literature is not an exemption to this as it also deals with the issue of identity in detail (Stoute, 2015). One cannot deny the fact that people have very strong and unquestionable bond with religion and religious sentiments (Hollenbach, 1993).

It is useful to distinguish between two things: religion and religious identity. People should not mix up the two things. Religious justifications for social actions are different from having a particular religious identity (Lim & Putnam, 2010). If for example people look in the history of the recent past they may see that many wars have been fought in the name of religion in different parts of the world. But the real question which needs to be raised and unearthed is whether or not these wars were religious and theological in nature. The deep analysis of the wars will uncover the fact that in many of these, religion was used merely as a cover for the political, geographic and economic interests. Researchers may bring the reality to fore so that people have more clear ideas of what is going on in the name of religion and how religion is being manipulated across the world today. In the current world people can see that many people use the tag of religion only to fulfill their hidden agendas and desires. Therefore, people can understand the motifs behind every big event taking place in the world. In the present world the rich reservoir of petroleum has increased the possibility of secular wars being fought in the name of religion. There is high probability that countries having Muslims in majority can potentially become a battle field to gain the maximum petroleum resources in the name of religion (Tarlow, 2018). People furthermore, need to be aware, as Monica Toft has

described, that “Religious wars are more common than secular ones, and they are more brutal” (Toft, 2013). Religion has for long been attached with violence by a lot of people. This is in fact a debatable topic which needs serious attention and scholarly discussion so that a fruitful conclusion can be reached at. Any religious violence cannot be separated from its historical perspective and background. It distorts the truth to see religious violence in isolation and to do so distorts the identity of religion and religious people (Philip, Nora, Stephen, Jeffrey, 2009). Therefore, it is pertinent to see religious identity in connection with the pentad rather than seeing it in isolation.

THE BLIND MAN'S GARDEN

The Blind Man's Garden is a novel written by Nadeem Aslam. The plot of the novel takes place in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The novel involves scenes not only from different cities of Afghanistan and Pakistan but also very briefly takes people to the US where the tragic accident of 11 September, 2001 took place.

6.1 Complete Analysis of *The Blind Man's Garden*

The novel explores different actions and their reactions in the post 9/11 era. The writer talks about Americans, Afghan people and Pakistani people and develops relations among them. This novel can be studied from many different perspectives but in the present case I am interested in exploring the portrayal of religious identities in it. I, through pentadic analysis, tried to explore and analyze important characters of the novel: Mikal, Basie, Naheed, Rohan, and the “Jihadi's” related to the Ardent Spirit. I first describe the kind of religious identities all these characters are ascribed in the novel. Then, I describe how this set of characters and the dramatic arc of the novel produce three kinds of “third persona”, and finally I discuss the potential ways these characters and the absent persona would be likely to constitute the second persona of the novel for both Western audiences and Pakistani youth considering secularity. To start with I will analyze Mikal, the main character of the novel.

6.2 Mikal; A Scenic Driven Character

Mikal is the main character of the novel who represents many aspects of Muslim's lives. It is very interesting to study his character in the light of dramatic construction because he unveils many different things if studied from this angle. Mikal largely lacks his own purposes. This lack of strong personal purpose, combined with the weak position from which he comes in society, means that his actions and the effects of those actions are largely directed by scenic factors.

The first introduction of Mikal is a scene on page 14 in which we find Mikal getting ready to leave to go to Afghanistan with Jeo. This scene introduces Mikal to the readers as a character who strongly believes in the bond of

friendship. There is a sudden big decision made by Mikal in the very first scene which will be the consistent pattern throughout the novel. Throughout the novel we find Mikal being pushed forward by the scenes and circumstances. He does so many things just under certain situations and conditions and the scenes at different occasions are the driving force which make him act the way he acts in the novel. There surely are certain occasions on which he acts very maturely and his actions stand for general and religious identities. So Mikal is the main character of the novel with whom many aspects of religious identities are associated.

Mikal's inability to shape his own destiny is in part the product of three constraints from his background. His parents were Communists and his father was arrested around the time of Mikal's birth and he never returned to his home again. By the age of 10 his mother also died. Now Mikal lost both parents and people fallen on hard times would come to him to ask him to say a prayer for them. This scene ascribes three characteristics to the personality of Mikal. Firstly, his parents being Communist were out of favour in the society because of different religious beliefs. Secondly, being an orphan Mikal had a certain place in the society and religiousness was attached with him because his prayers were more likely to be answered by God. Now, he is considered as someone who has a strong connection with God as compared to laypeople. The third characteristic is his being a weak member of a society means that he is unable to earn any kind of strength and power by himself alone. In the beginning of the novel nothing goes his way and he is supposed to carve a way out for himself. When Jeo decides to go to Peshawar and then to Afghanistan ultimately, we find Mikal readily agreeing to go with him. When Jeo starts his journey towards Peshawar along with this father, there is Mikal also travelling with them in the same train but they keep it secret from Rohan. At night Mikal goes to see Jeo in his cabin and Jeo shows him the maps of Afghanistan. There is a purpose of the acts performed by the agent i.e. Mikal; he wants to help Jeo while he stays there in Afghanistan because Mikal has already been to Afghanistan and the agency behind this act is Naheed who is married to Jeo but whom Mikal also loves. Mikal was leaving with Jeo because Rohan, Jeo's father, brought him home after the death of Mikal's mother. Ever since then the friendship between the two of them developed into real brother like relation. With the passage of time Mikal developed a liking for Naheed who got married to Jeo. The already existing friendship was further strengthening because of Naheed, which in other cases like this could become a bone of contention and separation between the two friends. Instead Mikal took it as a source of strengthening the friendship.

Mikal's tendency to let relationships act as the driving force of his actions in the absence of conventional guiding purposes is symbolized in a key scene in the novel. The writer flashes us back to the past life of Mikal where he would disappear for several days without letting anybody know where he went. Mikal was working as a mechanic and was earning some money. The purpose of this was to pay the rent of the room he was staying in and was waiting for his father to someday return to the same room from which he has disappeared years ago. This act of working as a mechanic and staying in the room and waiting for his father to return indicates the sentiments and love for his father on the part of Mikal. His elder brother Basie has long lost the hope of their father to return but the young Mikal was not hopeless. He would be afraid and terrified of the darkness and the surroundings; still he was consistent in his action of waiting for his father. He was pursuing a futile purpose through the agency of extreme hard work and he was making more money than what he needed. One day, not knowing what to do with the extra money he had earned, he set the money on fire, turning all of it into ashes. This action on the part of the agent is an indication that the absence of any realistic purpose in his life let all his acts and agencies implied go to waste and that the agent must very quickly come out of the imaginative world and start living in the real life. Right from the beginning the writer has established the fact that Mikal's life is mostly going to be dependent on others and scenic factors. The scenes and circumstances will be playing the major role in shaping the religious identity of Mikal.

Another example of the way in which relationships and scenes govern Mikal's actions and the course of his life occurs when the driver who was delivering Jeo and Mikal to some camp so that they could work to provide medical care to fighters asked them to fetch water from the nearby spring and upon their return they find the convoy missing from there. The purpose of this action was to drop Mikal and Jeo there to be taken by some other unknown people and engage them in fighting rather than in providing medical assistance. The agency employed here is sneakiness. Once again Mikal is helpless and his life story is going to be moved forward by the scene into which he has been forcefully put. The agents who left their homes to lend medical assistance to those affected by the war are now going to become fighters themselves under the compulsion of the scene they are put into through the agency of deception. Now, Mikal the friend of the medical helper is going to become Mikal the fighter; a religious fighter who is supposed to fight for his religion and for his fellow Muslims. The current scene and the agency are going to drastically alter the identity of the agent here at this point. Mikal, the weak orphan child of Communist parents is being

transformed into a strong religious fighter in the scene through the agency of others' deceit and sneakiness.

These actions and agencies misrepresent Islamic identities. Sometime afterwards, other people come in a truck and after confirming their identities they embrace Mikal and Jeo and call them as "brothers". This act of making "brothers" through deception and sneakiness by throwing the receiving agents in a scene where they don't have any option but to agree with the newly developed relationship is being presented as a way of Islam. The purpose of doing so is to recruit soldiers to fight for the cause of Islam, which is in fact far away from the real teachings of Islam. The scene and the agency implied by the active agents against the receiving agents is a misrepresentation of the religious identity. This is not only misrepresentation of religious identity but this is also misrepresentation of war strategies sanctioned by Islam.

The representation of Islamic identities is also confused in the novel by interactions among Americans, Mikal and Jeo, and Taliban fighters. Related to the previous scene is another scene on page 58 where Mikal oversee a white American soldier and he feels cold air run through his veins and body. His sixth sense tells him that Americans are organizing an attack on the Taliban headquarters. In this scene the agent i.e. Mikal detaches himself from the Taliban when he thinks that the Taliban headquarters is the place where he and Jeo are being taken to. He doesn't think that Americans are going to attack "us". He rather thinks that Americans are going to attack Taliban headquarters where he and Jeo are being taken to. This scene may look very simple, one which is a source to take the story of the novel ahead, but for a researcher of religious identity this scene is very important. This is because this scene clearly differentiates between identities of the Taliban on the one hand and Mikal and Jeo on the other hand. Although the two of them left Heer to go to Afghanistan, they were not going to join the ranks and fight for Taliban who had their own particular religious identity and religious purpose. Nonetheless, despite that fact, Jeo and Mikal are now being considered as part of the Taliban by the Americans. The, dramatic elements, if juxtaposed, portray different religious identities in this single paragraph.

This difference of identity on the part of Mikal is further established in the scene when we find Americans heavily attacking the Taliban headquarters and we find Mikal and Jeo fighting for the Taliban because they don't have any other choice. Still the purpose for Mikal is not to fight Americans because he has a religious or identity bond with Taliban. He is fighting only because of the scenic constraints. The actions of others have led him to be placed with the Taliban

fighters and the Americans come to this place considering everybody inside there as their enemy. Although he is engaged in the fight with the American, this is not his purpose at all. His purpose is to get himself and Jeo out of the situation. A key agency is the memory of Naheed. He has letters of Naheed written to him before she got married to Jeo and he wants to protect these letters as they present a wealth and strength to him. Until now we clearly find that Mikal is a character whose life is shaped by the scenes in which he is put by different agents and agencies. Naheed, and through her Jeo, are the primary agencies because of which Mikal is there in Afghanistan and now is found engaged in fierce war.

As the novel progresses, the movement of Mikal continues to be directed by the scene, which is itself the product of the purposes of others. During the battle he loses his senses and when he comes into consciousness he finds himself as a prisoner in the custody of a war lord. He is chained and the bullets inside his body are not removed by the captor. Not only this much but the war lord cut off his trigger finger on each hand so that he permanently becomes disabled to shoot a bullet. The Americans and the war lord have succeeded in capturing a dangerous “religious fighter, a religious extremist and a religious terrorist” who must be punished in the most severe way possible. Multiple agencies combined with different scenes to make him act in ways he might have never thought of. His actions have altered his identity from a poor helpless orphan boy with no particular religious interest into a terrorist and a dangerous fighter.

The role of deceit as an agency for fulfilling the purposes of others is further developed as there comes another twist in the life of the “dangerous terrorist” when in chapter 16 readers find that Mikal is taken to a faraway mosque on the top of hills. He is told he is to play his part as an accomplice in stealing the 1400-year-old cloak that belonged to the holy prophet PBUH. The two agents of the act, the father and the son, are taking the chained Mikal along with them on a “holy mission” of stealth. There are three agents involved in the act; the father, the son, and Mikal. Actually, the mission is not about a religious icon. Instead, the former two are going to deliver the latter one to Americans because he is being identified as a “dangerous religious terrorist”. This motive, which blends religion with violence, is hidden from Mikal and he is told that they are on a different religiously-associated mission: they are going to steal the holy cloak of the prophet. Here it is very important to note that the writer has depicted a scene where religion is affiliated with crimes and fraud. Moreover, during the scene readers are shown that the father and the son are offering their prayers as well and so does Mikal. Crime, betrayal, and the selling out of Mikal to

Americans is being done along with the religious rituals under the veil of religious motives.

Mikal, too, however, gives short cut to religion. He cuts his prayer short in order to save a little time so that he can fix a bullet that he found in the room of the war lord into the fuse of the head lights of the car. The agency of cutting his prayer short, a cunning way of offering prayer and worship, is providing a chance to Mikal to make his escape possible. Hence this is repeatedly clear that Mikal has no strict religious identification with the peoples he is with, in the present scenes. His religious identity is that of a helpless man following rituals out of compulsion. On the other hand his captors have a certain kind of religious identity, which the writer has highlighted. They on the one hand are offering prayers in order to please Allah and on the other hand are going on a stealth mission which is their worldly business. Here we find clear contradictions and dichotomy in the religiousness of the captor. How can Allah be pleased with them while they are engaged in wicked activities and they think that just doing a few rituals will save them from His wrath. This also indicates misconception and misrepresentation of Islam on the part of such agent.

This section of the novel represents the maturing of Mikal in important ways. The insufficiency of his motives of friendship in guiding his life and the power of the deceit of others to put him in scenes he does not wish to be in and lead to him to acts he does not want to undertake produces a kind of intensified, if still localized, sense of personal purpose for him. The war lord has promised freedom to Mikal if they succeed in their mission of stealing the cloak, but Mikal doesn't trust him. The agency of mature calculation about his possible escape makes him alert to any possibility of escape instead of relying on the success of his mission for the escape. The promise proves to be false and the mission of stealth fake one too as Mikal notices a large boot print in the snow near the mosque. That boot print signified the presence of an American. In this scene the agent i.e. the war lord performed an action of selling Mikal to the American only to earn money.

This purpose of earning the money on the part of the war lord has altered the identity of Mikal drastically. His transformation from a poor, helpless orphan into a "dangerous religious terrorist" becomes complete when he is handed to the Americans. An orphan car mechanic who was renting a room from which his father was picked up by unknown people, security forces most probably, and waiting for his father to return someday, went to Afghanistan in order to help his friend, brother and most importantly husband of his love Naheed in order to give him company and protect him from any evil that may

come his way- has now become a jihadi dangerous enough to be sold to the Americans who will investigate him. This is the story of many people in this part of the world where scenes, agencies and actions done by others can give totally different identities to the victims.

In chapter 19 Mikal continues to have his existence shaped by others. He is shown in the prison of Americans and different torture techniques are being applied in order to get some information out of him. How can a person give out some information when he is totally innocent? But the agency of torture-both physical and mental- makes him articulate things he never knew thus conforming his newly adopted identity. Notably, in the face of direct torture, he tells his captors nothing. But they eventually use his bonds with Jeo and Naheed against him. He is told that Jeo is in the next cell and "Jeo" is made to scream in pain. On page 185 he is told that according to Jeo he has taken Bayt of loyalty to Osama bin Laden two years ago. To free Jeo, he testifies to the Americans that he has taken the oath with Osama bin Laden. Even his past actions are now controlled by others. He is compelled to say that he has done things he had not done. However, in the same extended scene he tries to assert his real identity once again when he tells the American that "I am a prisoner. They sold me to you for money. I have nothing to do with this war"(p. 190). Here as a researcher I find agency playing a big role in altering Mikal's identity before the purpose on part of another agent i.e. the war lord, altered his identity at the first stage. The war lord had a purpose of gaining money and this purpose on his part altered the identity of Mikal and made him a "terrorist". Now the agency of torture is reinforcing and asserting the newly established identity which in fact is a religious identity; Muslims being portrayed as terrorists and violent.

Mikal's new identity is one, however, that he will not be able to escape, even after he leaves the custody of the Americans. In chapter 25 we find that after being disappointed about finding something from him the Americans have decided to set him free. They are taking him back to the same mosque in order to set him free as they do with all the prisoners when they set them free; they drop them at the same place from where they were picked up initially. They bring him in a helicopter and two MPs and Mikal climb out of it. While they are walking to the mosque, Mikal can smell the fire of a shot. In the fraction of a second he thinks he is being shot by the Americans as per his expectation. In self-defense, he snatches the gun from one of the Americans and within no time he shoots both of them to death.

A dramatic change has occurred in this scene. The innocent and helpless poor Mikal who was a prisoner first of the war lord and then of the Americans

has now shot two American soldiers and is running towards the mountain to some unknown destination. From the man of weak purpose, an agent who was receiving all the bad things inflicted by others, he becomes the active agent who is violent and who has killed two American Special Force soldiers and escaped. He has acted in accord with his newly given identity: a fighter in a war between the Americans, the Taliban and other local forces. The other soldier in the helicopter tried to pick his fellows up but the firing coming from the mosque did not allow him to do so. Only then did Mikal realize that the firing did not come from the Americans but from the mosque and that he has committed an error of judgment. Even though he has acted as a fighter, his action has still not aligned with his purposes, neither to protect himself nor to help his friends. At that point, he has no option but to run away. The agency of violence and shooting the two soldiers to death seems a natural one under the circumstances but nonetheless the action confirms him as a dangerous terrorist who must be killed. Here, the dramatic construction is shaping the identity of Mikal in a way he himself has never thought of.

Three different agents are involved in the development of this scene. Firstly, there is the war lord whose purpose is to make money. Secondly, there are the Americans who are madly searching for Osama, his whereabouts, his hideout and his fellows. The third agent in the scene is Mikal whose purpose is to free himself and Jeo out of these imprisonments but who ends up being imprisoned in the bigger cage now. He did escape the American jail but now he knows that he will not be safe even when he returns to his home in Heer.

After running away from the place, Mikal travelled for 8 days to enter Pakistan and when he reached Peshawar he could go to his home in Heer but he is still thinking of Jeo and wants to free him from the captivation as well. Naheed is the agency which keeps him going forward in his life but in this scene Naheed, wife of Jeo, is keeping him in the dangerous area of Peshawar and at the border of Afghanistan. His aim in this scene is to become an agent of freedom for Jeo. Mikal is endeavoring all this hardship and giving Jeo company because he has friendship with him but more importantly because Jeo is husband of Naheed, the love of Mikal, and Mikal wants Naheed's husband to be safe and sound for her. Mikal doesn't wish Naheed get into any trouble in case something untoward happens to Jeo. But there is a hint of the kind of identity Mikal has. Mikal is clearly a social and amiable person with no violence and transgression as part of his personality. But this different scenes created by multiple agents through a number of agencies have made him kill two Americans in the previous scene. This is very unfortunate and people must appreciate all the elements of the

dramatic construction before labeling a person with a particular identity.

The stark rift between Mikal's real personal motivational structure (his underlying purposes, signified by his love of family and friends) and the new identity he has been given are made clear when he takes on a new friendship. As Mikal is hiding, Akbar, who was a fellow prisoner in the American jail, picks Mikal out and brings him to his home in South Waziristan and provides him shelter and necessary medical treatment. Once Mikal recovers a little, Akbar tells him how the Americans have advertised him and they are searching for the "criminal Mikal" who have shot two American soldiers. The two of them also discuss the possible punishment "the criminal Mikal" must receive. Mikal knows that there is no way out because the Americans will be trying to find him in twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years for having killed two of them. Mikal expresses his regret and feeling of guilt for having killed the two Americans by mistake. Akbar tries to use the violence committed by the Americans as moral license and tells Mikal that he evened things up with the Americans for what they have done to him. In reply Mikal tells him that they haven't at least killed him. Akbar tells him that they nonetheless have killed plenty of his people if they have not killed him and Mikal tells him that that wasn't the way it worked for him. The discussion between the two of them in this scene is very important because it asserts the real identity of Mikal. In the previous scene Mikal had committed violence and had killed two Americans but his purpose was just self-defense. In this scene we find him expressing his regret and sorrow over the action he did. The posters and advertisement portray Mikal as a violent killer while Mikal's responses to Akbar still show him to be a humble, down to earth and faithful human being who cares a lot for humanity. The dramatic construction and the results derived from it by two different parties communicate opposite messages. This is in fact what is happening in the world and it is a lesson for all of us that we must try to look for the bigger picture of the scene and actions committed by certain people before we conclude something.

Additional complexities regarding the relationships among actions and religious identities and purposes are introduced in this section of the novel. During his stay at Akbar's home one day Mikal sees Akbar's sister, Salomi. She was in fact taking care of him during his days of illness. She had sent him a gift of a snow leopard through Akbar. One day just before the sunrise she came to meet him briefly. Mikal offered his condolences to her at the death of her husband who died in Afghanistan during the fight with the American. Salomi in this scene offers a different religious identity. She tells Mikal that she not only approves and endorses the action of fighting with the Americans on the part of her brother and

husband but she wished she could also go and defend Afghanistan against the Americans had permission been granted to her. She also tells Mikal that her father blamed the clerics who arranged her son and son-in-law to go to Afghanistan and join Jihad. Now Mikal realizes why Akbar's father really didn't like him ever because he was considering Mikal also to be Jihadi and hardened one.

This scene offers a complicated picture of religious identities. The one who is not a Jihadi is considered a hardened Jihadi and the martyrs are not accepted as people who went to Jihad out of their personal choice but the blame is put on the cleric. Akbar's father dislikes Jihadi people because his own son and son in law have embraced martyrdom in Jihad against the Americans but he is sheltering the Al Qaeda Arabs because they are paying him money. This identity assertion is becoming more and more complicated in this scene. The person who have killed two Americans and who is being hunted by the Americans has no religious and violent intentions at all. The innocent person has been imprisoned twice and even after he is out of the jail, he is being hunted for the hardened religious identity attached to him which he really doesn't reflect in reality. And then there is Akbar's father who is hiding Al Qaeda militants because they are paying him money. Is he not an accomplice to the plot? Even though he is hiding the militants for financial benefits, his identity is not discussed by the writer here. The son, the daughter and the son-in-law of the family are deeply attached with jihad against the Americans but no violence is shown on their part. The only representation of religious devotion in this family is of those willing to die in a war. And their opponent—the father—is not any more attractive. Although he objects to the violent actions of his sons, he is shown to be not only mercenary, but willing to shelter those to whom he objects, as long as the pay is good enough.

This swirl of unsavory motives will further complicate Mikal's life after page 280. While Mikal is working in a gun factory, he is sent to deliver a gun to an Arab inside the home. When he goes to deliver the gun, he sees bank notes all around in the room and the piles are too big. Salomi tells him that she is going to be married to an Arab. She asks him to take her away with him but Mikal is helpless. It is here in this scene that Mikal develops sympathy for Salomi. Salomi's father has sold her to an Arab in the exchange of money and the agencies of wealth on part of the Arab and the helplessness on the part of Salomi are going to play a large role in the future life of Mikal and his identity as a humanist is further going to be reinforced. The two agents involved in this scene, Salomi's father and her would be husband, are playing a wicked game. Apparently an irrelevant agent in this scene, Mikal will feel the heat of the scene and his life story will taste another twist. After leaving the home of Akbar, Mikal finally returns to his home only

to learn about the death of Jeo and all that has happened to the family in his absence. He comes to know about the wicked intentions of Sharif Sharif, who wishes to marry Naheed for lust. He tells Naheed that he will employ every agency possible in order to prevent the marriage from taking place. Here in this scene once again we see the helplessness but heroism in the character of Mikal, who is ready to go to any level in order to achieve his purposes, which involve faithfulness to personal bonds, in this case, marrying Naheed.

The previous scene comes to an end when Akbar kills his father for his lust for money and wickedness and escapes his home and comes to Mikal at his home in Heer. But Akbar's arrival at Mikal's home creates another scene, as Akbar wants Mikal to help his sister and her husband get out of Pakistan by delivering them some money that Akbar brought with him. Here again we see that in the scene an agent i.e. Akbar has a purpose but the action to achieve the purpose is to be performed by Mikal which means another scenic based action and purpose taking the story of the Mikal further ahead. Previously Mikal acted spontaneously in scenes in which he had no other option but to do what he did. In this scene he has some options but the agency of relations with Akbar himself and Salomi will not allow Mikal to choose anything but to follow what Akbar has requested. If we analyze this from the pentadic dramatic construction we see that the purpose of helping Salomi and her husband is being achieved by the agent who has a secondary relation to them as compared to the primary agent i.e. Akbar. The agency of purity of heart, kindness and humanity is making the secondary agent in the scene act more than the primary agent in the scene.

Upon his return to his village, Mikal goes to Tara and asks for the hand of Naheed in marriage. She accepts the offer this time and tells Mikal that "I stood in your way once, I won't this time. I suppose when it comes down to it it's a man's word that counts. That's all the security a woman needs" (p. 211). Mikal promises his mother-in-law that he will return in five days after completing the mission and task asked by Akbar. In this scene we again see that Mikal had long waited to marry Naheed and once the time came to materialize his dream and to achieve his life purpose, the scene is taking him away from his purpose once again. He is a kind of a character who is repeatedly being taken away from achieving his own purpose by the demands of friendship and the purposes of others, and when he is far away from where he is supposed to be, he remembers his love; Naheed.

This journey away from Naheed turns out to be a long one, and it replays the themes that have been developed previously in the novel. Mikal's identity as a "terrorist" is a mislabeling that runs against his true character and

motives. The problem begins when Mikal arrives to find that Salomi and her husband are not at their family home. To seek them out, he puts the bag of money inside Akbar's home and goes out only to find the bag missing from that place upon his return. Losing the bag becomes a new agency which takes him further away from his real purpose of living a peaceful life along with Naheed in his village. He is up to a new task now to find some money for him in order to go back to his village after having lost the bag. His complications are finding no end. One scene puts him in a situation where he commits some action that doesn't go along with his intended purpose the result of which puts him into another situation, which in turn takes him farther away from his real purpose. So the dramatic structure not only is ascribing to him identities he has no relation with but the scenic based actions are taking the story forward along the lines unknown to him.

During the course of time Mikal goes to a family of a lady who worked as a cook for Akbar's family and asks them if he can find some work to make some money in order to go back to his home. Fatima's husband asks him if he can deliver his load to a nearby village for the exchange of money he needs to travel back to his village in Heer. Various misadventures on the road lead him to a desert where he finds an unconscious American Special Forces soldier who has been searching for the killer of his brother. He has the picture of the killer whose name is unknown but whose trigger finger on each hand is missing. He thinks that such a hardened terrorist should never have been released from jail and should have been intensively investigated. He has the white snow leopard, so Mikal wants to interrogate him about Salomi and her husband. The American is looking for Mikal, killer of his brother and the killer wants to talk to the soldier to know about the owner of the leopard. Mikal wants to get some information about Salomi and her husband. One of the agents is out in desperation to find the killer of his brother and to level the score with one of the most dangerous terrorists. The other agent in the scene is trying to get some information in order to pursue a purpose which was assigned by a friend who has helped him in his desperate time. The dramatic construction is making things continuously more complicated.

After some struggle with the American he loads the unconscious heavy fellow in the back of the pickup and starts his journey once again. Mikal tried to speak to the American and ask him about Salomi but the soldier didn't respond. Now the agent, i.e. Mikal, is taking the American soldier to the next village with the purpose to find something out from him using the agency of some English speaking person who can become his interpreter. Mikal the agent himself doesn't

know what he will do afterward with the American. He also doesn't know how he will help Salomi and her husband even if he finds them now because he has already lost the money he was to give them. But through the behavior and expressed intentions of Mikal one thing is clear, that he doesn't have mean intentions towards the American and that he still regrets having killed two of them by mistake and through the error of judgment. This hypothesis is supported by the action of the agent when during the mid-night he finds a cleric who is getting ready to perform his mid-night prayer and asks him if he can fix the broken arm of the American so that his pain can be lessened. The second agent in the scene, i.e. the cleric, refuses to do so when he sees a big tattoo on the back of the soldier which inscribes the word infidel. He refuses to treat someone who deliberately identifies himself as an infidel—proclaiming himself an enemy--and he asks Mikal to immediately take him out of the sight. The anger and hate springs out of the cleric because the patient has proclaimed himself an infidel. Had the patient not done so then he would have treated his broken arm. Upon reaching his destiny Mikal tells his host about the American and the whole story of Salomi. In this scene once again we find violence among the youngsters when they see an American soldier amongst them. They want to kill him instantly but through the agency of the power the elders have in the society the father of the family controls the younger ones. In order to help Mikal with the purpose of getting some information about Salomi, the father arranges a female teacher who can speak English. But the teacher is so terrified that she refuses to act as an agency for them.

When the news of the American breaks out there come some young people who try to use money and bargain as an agency to get the American from Mikal. This action on the part of the young fellows when they failed to capture him through the agency of violence at night reflects the customs of the war lords who would bargain for prisoners and would earn heavy money for their bargain just like Mikal himself was sold to the American by being portrayed as one of the terrorists. Mikal, however, refuses.

In the face of these negative purposes and characters, on page 388, Mikal's' identity as a humanist is confirmed, and the conclusion is offered that essentially and intrinsically human beings are one and the same. Through the agency of failed words, broken language and through pure human sentiment Mikal tells the American about Naheed, about Rohan and about the way he was sold to the American by the war lord against \$5000. He tells him about Jeo and the death of Basie. Through the agency of human nonverbal communication the writer has asserted the true identity of Mikal, which so far has been swaying from

one perspective to another perspective.

On his way back towards Fatima's home Mikal comes across tolls established by different war lords, and this once again puts him in a scene where he doesn't know how to act and what will be the consequences of every action he performs. Just like the whole story of the novel the actions of the agent are once again scene based. He is captured by yet another war lord and refuses to go away once he is released as prize for single-handedly capturing the American and bringing him to them. He doesn't accept the agency of the prize offered to him by the war lord and insists on taking the American with him. This action of insistence upon having the American is once again pushing him into potential danger but he still insists on it.

The last action of the novel is really marvelous and the writer has given the novel an impactful ending by portraying this scene in which Mikal draws maps and communicates to the American that he has seen his fellow countrymen and that both of them must run away from there. Understanding his nonverbal communication, the American runs away with him. Both the agents are running away knowing fully well that they will soon be followed by the people of the war lord. The two of them enter into a mosque. The infidel is in the home of Allah. This further worsens the already bad situation for both of them and there are very little chances of Mikal's achieving his real purpose and goal of meeting Naheed once again but he still stands by the American through his actions and agencies available to him in order to protect him from being killed.

When they enter the mosque and Mikal wants to switch on the microphone to be used as communication agency to the outside world to alert the American convoy that just passed the village, they find that an electrical wire is broken because of the short circuit. Mikal uses the necklace of Naheed, the most precious possession to him, as an agency to connect the electrical wire and asks the American to shout as loud as possible so that the American convoy can hear him and come to their rescue. Within 20 minutes the Americans came over and helped them out of the mosque.

Conclusion

In this novel the writer has depicted how Mikal sacrificed everything he possessed only in order to help a human being who otherwise should have been treated as an absolute enemy who deserved torturous death. The writer also depicted the mosque as a rescue place for the American. Through this last act Mikal not only found his love Naheed but he is ultimately freed from every prison and every cage which was there to capture him and to destroy his real identity as a human lover. The misperceived identity of a terrorist ascribed to him

eventually is cleared and a message of peace and mutual understanding is communicated through the character of Mikal by the writer. The message is that we must understand each other more deeply before we consider some people as violent, enemies to humanity and as people who must be eliminated from this earth. Instead a message of peace and mutual love can make this world a better place to live.

Mikal's character ultimately achieves his purposes, and these are good purposes, although he suffers greatly along the way. His fundamental emphasis on strong bonds to other humans repeatedly leads him into scenes where he is assigned false identities and even led to take harmful actions to others. But he never accepts these other identities or takes on the purposes of others. His persistence in following his sense of obligations to others ultimately leads him to be a model of human caring in the face of the worst obstacles. The writer ultimately portrays him as successfully returning to Naheed. However, the writer does not explicitly attribute this caring for others to Mikal's identity or beliefs as a Muslim. Instead, the writer portrays Islam as a scenic source of violence or as a false cover for other pernicious motives. Basie, the elder brother of Mikal, is also a character who doesn't represent strict religiousness and he is also portrayed as having great love for peace and humanity. However, he is portrayed as someone who exhibits more purposeful action in immediate situations. I will discuss his religious identification in some other article.

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