



RESEARCH PAPER

The Cultural Shift from a Muslim Nation to an Islamic State in Tahira Naqvi's *The History Teacher of Lahore*

¹Samavia, ²Sadia Qamar and ³Aamer Shaheen

1. M. Phil Scholar, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor of English Literature, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author

aamershaheen@gcuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This research paper reads Tahira Naqvi's portrayal of religious extremism and sectarian intolerance in *The History Teacher of Lahore* (2024) as an essential attribute of postcolonial historical fiction. The examination unravels the aspects of the marginalization of religious minorities using Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr's critical observations with regard to sectarian intolerance and religious extremism. Nasr suggests that religious extremism is not only a phenomenon in the theological aspect but a political agenda by the elites who utilize religion to acquire power and restructure the state and society. The historical annals of Pakistan serve as a witness to General Zia-ul-Haq's acquiring the role of that leading political elite to use religion as a weapon to strengthen his authoritarian regime. The research paper also examines the framework of religious fundamentalism and power dynamics as major causes of cultural shifts in the novel. Arif, the protagonist of the novel, is a history teacher who wants to unravel the true history to the young students and changes the rules of inequality in society by secretly helping the religious minorities from violence. The sectarian tensions that Naqvi presents in the novel and the fear experienced by the non-Sunni Muslims align with the argument made by Nasr.

KEYWORDS

Islamization, Religious Extremism, Minorities, Fundamentalism, Tahira Naqvi, *The History Teacher of Lahore* (2024), Zia-ul-Haq

Introduction

Tahira Naqvi's *The History Teacher of Lahore* (2024) is a novel against political powers, horrible agendas, and enforcement of turbulent laws in the name of Islamization of the country. Arif Ali, the main character of the novel is a dreamer, a poet, a teacher of history, who at a tender age of twenty years relocates to Lahore, in pursuit of his dreams. The novel begins with Arif being in Jinnah Park, a place where the sacred and the profane co-exist, hence representing the contradictory world around him. The unhappy life of Arif Ali and his increasing rebelliousness is set in the context of the turbulent period of his life and also by the impact of his mentor, Kamal Ahmad, an activist who urges him to read the works of Tagore and Sartre (Naqvi, 2024, p. 15) and speak out against injustice. Arif finds a job in a Government Model School for male students, but he faces a lot of challenges in a more and more suppressive environment. He develops a friendship with Salman, a new English teacher who is also anti-government oriented. The institutional setting, though, is indicative of the larger socio-political strains of General Zia administration, including sectarian and language antagonisms, mass floggings, and the banning of popular music. The antagonistic

relationships between Arif and the extremist teacher Samiullah Sheikh eventually led to both of them quitting their jobs. Both Arif and Salman later find themselves working in the more liberal Lahore Grammar Institute, where they befriend Zehra Raza. The three people spend time together, talking about modern happenings and praising the poetry of Arif. When Arif notices the widespread religious intolerance, he chooses to secretly join Kamal and his partner Nadira in their fight to support those children who have been falsely charged with blasphemy. These dangerous operations put Arif in danger from paramilitary forces. Amid this storm, love and the search for the truth develop. Salman and Zehra face the barriers to their interaction that can be explained by Shia-Sunni tensions, but they overcome them at the end. At the same time, Arif develops an epistolary romance with the sister of Salman, Roohi, by means of writing letters and poetry. They get to know each other better, and after a series of ups and down, they get engaged. A new dilemma manifests for Arif within his academic vocation. He is required to present a twisted history curriculum that praises intolerant emperors and demonizes liberal ones. In an effort to teach the truth to his students, Arif writes supplementary notes, which draw the disapproval of other teachers and make him of intimidation and violence. The most tragic part of the story is when Arif tries to protect a student who has been charged with blasphemy. He recruits the assistance of Kamal, but the project is prematurely terminated when he is engaged in a sectarian war, and the novel concludes inconclusively and sinisterly.

In the novel, the era of eighties is portrayed. Zia-ul-Haq was promoted to the rank of general in 1976 and was made the chief of army staff by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In 1977, Zia organized Operation Fair Play, whereby he ousted Zulfikar Bhutto and proclaimed martial law. In 1978, he became the sixth president of Pakistan and remained until he died in 1988. Bhutto was hanged on his orders in 1979. Zia's regime was considered a turbulent political situation in Pakistan. This was the era when Islamization was being imposed in the country, and certain Shariah and blasphemy laws were introduced. Public flogging was common, and women's testimony was considered as half of a man's. The women who faced violence and harassment were also considered culprits and were punished. The poets and activists who raised their voices against the injustices were being arrested and killed. The nineteen-eighties were the period in Pakistan when a Muslim state was forced to shift to an Islamic state. Christians as minorities faced many false accusations of blasphemy and were killed. Muslims were divided into sects, and sectarian minorities like the Shia also faced extremism and were called non-Muslims. Sunni-Shia clashes were at their peak, Punjabi and Urdu speaking, Ahmadi and non-Ahmadi, all these issues arose in the 1980s. All this enforcement of laws raised a feeling of marginalization and suppression among minorities and affected ordinary people's mentality. The school uniform was changed, dress codes were changed according to Shariah, and the textbook curriculum was also changed to teach the students a glorified Muslim heritage to raise the feeling of patriotism. Music was banned, which enraged the youth, and an act of rebellion took place at the social and cultural level.

Like Pakistan, almost every country in the world faces discrimination against religious minorities. The majority of a religious group threatens the freedom of the religious minorities and forms its mainstream culture. The marginalization of minorities, religious intolerance, extremism, and the effects of blasphemy laws are examined, focusing on the postcolonial lens. The research aims to identify the key factors of religious extremism and the power dynamics of totalitarianism that affect society differently. It explores how the implications of fair and true information regarding history can benefit society in reducing violence and unrest. The study also investigates the factors that led to the military coup in 1977 and fundamentalism in the novel *The History Teacher of Lahore* by Tahira Naqvi.

Literature Review

In a review of the novel, Maninder Sidhu (August 13, 2025) opines that Naqvi's *The History Teacher of Lahore* is a piece of political fiction that describes the times explicitly making it very close to other fictional and non-fictional narratives like those of Salman Rushdie, Mohammed Hanif, and Fatima Bhutto around Zia regime. The story is told through the eyes of a young school teacher cum poet, Arif Ali, and focuses on the day-to-day life during Zia regime. Arif is tutored by the charismatic activist Kamal Ahmad and spreads his progressive beliefs to friends and colleagues, including Salman Shah, Zehra Raza, and the school principal, Dr. Khan. The novel depicts the sweeping social changes that were generated through the status quo of Shariah laws, including the use of flogging in society, misuse of the laws of blasphemy, sectarianism between the Shia and the Sunnis, and the alienation of some minorities like the Ahmadis and the Christians. The story reveals the corruption of the educational system when the textbooks about history are distorted to adhere to the new religious dogma. There are episodes of efforts to save Christian kids, thus highlighting the cruel nature of the system. Replacing Allah with Khuda is another example of how the country was turning into an Islamic dictatorship, instead of a secular Muslim state. Being a pedagogical novel, the text seeks to warn the young readers against the harmfulness of fundamentalism. Each of the twenty-two chapters begins with quotations of different philosophers and authors, mostly Jean-Paul Sartre, thus giving the story a philosophical touch. It is typified by the prose style, which is direct and solemn, and takes no pleasure in humor or irony to emphasize the seriousness of the described events. Poetry is a symbol of hope and a carrier of revolutionary mood and romance. It quotes lines of poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Bulleh Shah, and these support their perspective that people should not be divided but united. Naqvi depicts a Lahore full of historical and cultural information, which is under a shadow of death, and hence this novel is an alert message to the pluralistic society on the consequences of religious extremism (Sidhu, 2025, *The Tribune*).

Naqvi uses Urdu poetry in the entire novel, and often translates it herself, thus reflecting on the emotional climate of the protagonist. While reviewing the novel, Somdatta Mandal (February 21, 2024) attempts to compare Naqvi's novel with Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* to understand that both authors manage to define the spirit of Lahore during two different periods of turmoil. *The History Teacher of Lahore* is praised due to the lively description of a metropolis that struggles with radical Islamization and its strong influence on people who live in it. It is strongly suggested as an outstanding first work and an annual collectible with a unique insider/outsider view of a country on the brink of disaster (Mandal, 2024, *Borderless Journal*).

Fawzia Afzal Khan (May 18, 2024) in her review of the novel states that Naqvi challenges the discourse on Islamization taught in the schools by the government. *The History Teacher of Lahore* uses the historiographical methodology based on the lives of common people as inspired by Howard Zinn, and has the goal of refuting the official state narrative about the authoritarian rule of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1980s Pakistan. The thematic outline of the novel will attract a wide readership with an interest in literature, philosophy, and political science because the novel addresses the most important question of how people create personal and political commitments. It is an excellent example of the feminist adage that the personal is the political, an unobtrusive lesson that both the protagonist and the reader internalize, thus posing a moral quandary to modern society that how do we decide to live, and when it all comes down to it, how do we face death? It is proposed in the very end of the novel that love is a multi-layered, multi-dimensional structure, and it appears to look like a diamond. This is a lesson in how to persevere in hope, as Sufism teaches, even when all is hopeless. The text further identifies this complex concept of love with the feelings of the Pakistani diaspora, who are at once in a contradictory love of their country, hating everything in it, and longing after

its image of perfectness. The text helps the reader love the lost loves and be optimistic about new ones. This reminds us of Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who also preached the doctrine of hope and power. Khan observes that Naqvi represents the Pakistani Nakba, a national tragedy of people who became witnesses to the country's deterioration. This tragedy is explained by the fact that false values are supported in society. But the text ends tellingly on an up-note, that, just as Palestine will finally find freedom, so too will Pakistan be free of the control of its own religious extremists (Khan, 2024, *The Friday Times*).

By navigating Naqvi's *The History Teacher of Lahore*, Waseem Anwar (August 23, 2024) asserts that this novel is thought provoking and shows the diversity of experience and experiment of the writer. The novel challenges how the culture of Pakistan was perverted and hardened during the dictatorial rule of an anonymous General of the 1980s. It was this General, who subsequently met his death in a mysterious aircraft accident, who imposed upon the nation a coercive Islamization. The stories of atrocities witnessed during this time in the novel are equal to the ones in Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag ka Darya* (River of Fire), which discusses the horrors of partitioning the Indian subcontinent. The danger of de-historicizing the past of a nation is revealed in the novel, and the perspective is close to those who have to deal with the consequences of such behavior. The style of the novel is cinematic, flashback-oriented, flowing, and simple. Naqvi is full of allusions to a broad horizon of philosophers and poets, such as Socrates and Sartre, Ghalib and Faiz. This broad intertextuality is an invitation to a critical analysis of how the reader forms his or her vision of the world, and forms a discourse that challenges those in authority, whether political, religious, or social, who distort the facts to benefit themselves. The novel makes a direct connection between the past, such as the holy secular battles of Mughal rule, and the current issue of Pakistan, such as sectarianism and discrimination against minorities. The style of the novel quietly absorbs the themes of the writers of the past, colonial and post-colonial, who wrote about the soul of the region. The novel's language is not after the stereotypical post-colonial fashion, but it gives us a reminder of novels such as Forster's *A Passage to India*, Kipling's *Kim*, and Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. The combination of pessimistic and optimistic themes in the novel, which are informed by other books, including Abdullah Hussain's *Melancholy Generations* and Jean Paul Sartre's *Age of Reason*, allows the reader to contemplate deeply but not to get crushed. Lahore is a city that links the past, between pre-Partition and nowadays, and it is a place where you find thinkers, writers, and artists (Anwar, 2024, *The Aleph Review*).

Theoretical Framework

The paper attempts to unveil the aspects of fundamentalism, marginalization, and power dynamics that lead to religious intolerance and extremism. The concept of the infliction of blasphemy laws, to urge people to act as a model of Islamic Shariah, and the oppression of sectarian minorities is unveiled. This study also shows how extremism in religion leads to division and intolerance in society. *The History Teacher of Lahore* (2024) is analyzed through a post-colonial lens of religious extremism. There is, as such, no theorist who works solely on religious extremism from the legacy of colonialism and imperialism, because no one emphasizes this approach, that how historical power imbalances, oppression, and cultural subjugation have created conditions that lead to radicalization. Vali Nasr's works serve as the theoretical approach as his works engage with the central issues of post-colonial studies and recognize the political and social subtexts. Nasr's approach serves as a point of connection between lived reality and fiction. Nasr signifies that political leaders exploit the religious law not only to be pious but to serve as a means to gain social control and eradicate any opposition. Through foregrounding of religious extremism, it is possible to understand how religion is politicized in the novel. The novel is put in the role of political allegory or social commentary. It therefore seems that Naqvi employs a fictional story to define the realities of political processes that Nasr theorizes; this process adds depth to

interpretation as it correlates the trajectories of the characters to the powers of society that influence them. The theory of religious extremism supposes that the anomalous conception of religion, which is defined by unusual beliefs, ideologies, and behaviors, generates certain convictions and actions. The theory is rather flexible in its definition, but generally, it presupposes a drastic shift in normative religious thought and practice, which can lead to intolerance and violence. Extremists sometimes state that their interpretation is the only and original way of understanding their religion, and they thus disenfranchise other religious or secular viewpoints as heretical and illegitimate. Nasr believes that religion is one of the strategic instruments that political actors can mobilize a large number of people and build power. Religious extremism is a complex construct that is triggered by psychological and sociopolitical precipitants. Nasr emphasizes the history and the intricate association of religion, politics, and power in the Middle East and South Asia. His theories are also relevant to religious extremism in the Sunni-Shia conflict, especially his theory of sectarianism as a political force. Nader Hashemi (October 27, 2015) analyzing the works of Vali Nasr and Joel Migdal argues that numerous societies dominated by Muslims are ruled by what can be called weak states. One of the most common tactics in such environments is the use of a divide-and-rule approach whereby state actors methodically take advantage of existing social and political divisions, such as sectarian ones, to ensure that no single opposition is formed. The state thus turns into the key mobilizer of identities, shifting cultural differences into the tools of political struggle that are used to serve the interests of the existence of the state. In Pakistan, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, in the late 1970s, started an Islamization agenda which, in effect, was a political gambit of 'Sunnifying' the state and cementing his rule. General Zia imposed the third and longest martial law on July 5, 1977, in the history of Pakistan. That military coup changed the orientation of the country, and the country is still facing its consequences. Irfan Aslam observes (2017, July 2) that Zia redefined Pakistan, and to understand his concept, we have to delve into the origin of the 'idea of Pakistan' (Aslam, 2017, *Dawn*).

The religious majority often dictates the social and political fate of the minority (Nasr, 2006, p. 251), thus radicalizing the sectarian relations. Nasr argues that, due to the beliefs of most Muslims, politics has always been separate from religion. Being an Iranian emigrant at the time of the revolution, Nasr is characterized by a certain intellectual interest in explaining the complex nature of the interaction between Islam and politics. Nasr frames Islamic fundamentalism as primarily a political phenomenon rather than a strictly religious one. Nasr refers to Islamic fundamentalism as a new phenomenon formed in the late twentieth century. It serves as a political textual template of the lived realities of Muslims and is often used to explain socio-political realities.

Results and Discussion

The History Teacher of Lahore (2024) is a debut novel by a brilliant writer, translator, and clinical professor, Tahira Naqvi. It is a powerful political novel that traces the turbulent history of the Pakistani people during the 1980s, and in particular the military government of General Zia-ul-Haq. The book is a heart-rending social commentary, a dramatic and sometimes tragic story of the forced Islamization of what was once a secular society. This novel, though, is far more than a historical narrative; it is also a highly personal story of a man trying to establish a sense of meaning and love in a world that is coming to be more intolerant and unsafe. It is a strong sign of how the political regime can transform the culture as well as the history and life of people in the country. Fundamentalism works as a political initiative that uses religious structures as a means to implement political power, which usually leads to dictatorial rule and social disintegration. This study helps in De-historicizing the deliberate act of revision of national history to suit a given ideological agenda. Arif is portrayed as the first-person by Naqvi, who mundane the experiences of those who are in a

specific socio-political situation. The theoretical basis of the analytical framework provides an alternative through which the politicization of religious identity, sectarian boundaries, and historiography can be evaluated. These constructs in this context are used by authoritarian regimes to strengthen hegemonic control and induce compliance in the form of how the regime of General Zia -ul-Haq is described in the novel.

The novel explores that Pakistanis are moving towards identity change as conservative and religious-minded blocks of national identity evict secular and liberal values. It demonstrates the effects of these macro political and social transformations on the ordinary ways of life. Arif is presented as a character, where his own philosophical and sensitive character is contrasted with the pragmatic and social character of his friend Salman. Arif finds refuge and a form of expression of his poetic desire at Cozy Cafe where art is a way of escaping the cacophony of traffic. His learning disabilities are also expressed through his lesson preparations as he attempts to make a character such as Mahmud Ghaznavi relatable to his students. The plot of the novel goes deeper into the inner world of Arif, showing his desire to be in the past. He finds this as he purchases old music, which he then listens to find out the youthful, joyful sounds, and in doing so compares the shabby present of the Anarkali Bazaar with its romantic past. The shrine of Anarkali is now used as the Lahore record office. This is why this physical search for music resembles his search for lost relations, namely with Kamal and Nadira. The writing is centered on the subconscious and moral conflicts of Arif. A cup of tea and music can induce a euphoric state, but this is disrupted by troubling dreams and restless sleep. His anxieties are revealed in the dream, a striking and disturbing scene about Nadira and Kamal. This is then immediately preceded by a jolting question of a student concerning public floggings, which were allowed by the government. This query compels Arif to face a frightening social fact. Although he is personally disgusted, he is obligated by professional and moral considerations to be present at the event as a history teacher. The unresolved anxieties are culminated in his final dream in which he tries to rescue people and this shows a subconscious wish to be a hero unlike his inert actions in the real world.

Arif goes through the riot-filled streets of Lahore, and there he meets a demonstration led by women. He finds out that the protest is about Safia Bibi, an eighteen year old blind girl convicted of a three year term on adultery charges after she was raped by her landlord and his son and became pregnant. Her case attracted international notice because the new Hudood Ordinance needed four male witnesses to establish rape, which she was unable to do. Arif is seriously worried about this unfairness. He tries to flee reality and seeks a bypass road, which guides him to the old Jail grounds. He notices how the region has changed from a place of traditional captivity to a busy marketplace and a living neighborhood. Arif attends a popular flogging in the Jail Grounds. A crowd of curious visitors and an emaciated young tea-peddler came to view it. It is an execution of flogging a criminal called Karam Din. The penalty does not seem as harsh as anticipated, and the audience cites that it was not genuine, and Karam Din smiles and screams in victory. This incident is very significant for Arif, which resulted in an intense ideological argument with his colleague Samiullah Sheikh, who is a strict adherent of Shariah law and its harsh consequences. The argument becomes heated and ends with Arif literally plunging himself into Samiullah and venting his frustrations with what he considers the cruelty of an idea. The consequences of the outburst of Arif are prompt. The principal, Dr. Habibullah, severely rebukes him and compels him to apologize. He understands that his teaching life in the school has ended. He is disgusted by the show the flogging gives to the people and admits to his friend Salman that it amounts to a circus. He does not think that he will be able to receive a letter of recommendation due to his rash behavior and will have to return to working at tuitions and part-time jobs. It is about to sink into despair when Salman comes in as a true friend and informs him that he had applied to a

private school: The Lahore Grammar Institute, to take Arif on. This gives Arif a modicum of hope in the midst of his professional and emotional crisis.

Naqvi clearly mentions that the concept of blasphemy as a hazard to the nation-building, deep-rooted Islamic identity is a mixture of zeal, politics, and authority. This indicates how religious feelings are being used politically to gain power and control, creating a misguided national identity. Naqvi shows a society that struggles with extremism, with human rights being compromised, legal procedures being undermined, and the state not playing its role in ensuring that a culture of fear and violence thrives in the name of religious zealotry. The murder of human rights lawyer Rashid Rehman suggests that everyone in society bears a collective guilt over the current environment of intolerance and violence (Naqvi, 2024, p. 35). It also charges the local state authorities with inaction and complicity to be passive and not to defend, even when people are defending the rights of the accused. Victims of the Blasphemy Law are no longer worthy of due process. They must be reprimanded on the spot. This illustrates a gross failure of the legal system and the high number of extrajudicial murders, as in the murder of another blasphemy accused in a police station near Lahore. The novel questions that who gets the right to write history and what happens when that history is manipulated for political gain. Arif's commitment to teaching the "true" history makes him a quiet but determined rebel (p. 148). Amidst the political chaos, poetry, particularly Urdu poetry, and music become powerful forms of resistance. Arif, a poet himself, finds solace and a way to express his dissent through his art. His love story, conducted through letters and poems, also symbolizes a private, human connection that defies the public turmoil.

Pakistan is the country that got freedom due to the two-nation theory, according to which Muslims had the right to get a separate homeland because of their diversity from Hindus on religious, cultural, social, and traditional levels. The state of Pakistan is driven by secular individuals, but it descended to religious arguments and sectarian violence (Ispahani, 2017, p. 4). There were many key factors behind the cultural shift of the nation towards Islamization. For this purpose, it is necessary to get awareness about the history of these interpretations that lead to the making of the national identity. The trajectory of Pakistan's national identity has always been fraught with competing visions. At the time of independence in 1947, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision suggested a pluralistic "Muslim nation" that would safeguard the rights of all citizens regardless of religion. Yet within three decades, especially during General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization project (1977-1988), Pakistan underwent a cultural transformation in which national identity was increasingly redefined through religious markers. The ideological shift from a "Muslim nation" to an "Islamized society" was not merely a political move but a cultural and social reorientation of everyday life. Tahira Naqvi's novel provides a powerful microcosmic lens through which this cultural transition can be understood. The text describes a learning environment in which pedagogy, discipline and memory are reorganized to suit the state-directed Islamization. It shows the role of schools as knowledge and socialization institutions in instilling religious discourse into national consciousness. This work argues that the cultural shift from a Muslim nation to an Islamized society, as depicted in Naqvi's story, was facilitated by four key factors: curriculum and pedagogy, surveillance and discipline, rewriting of collective memory, and regulation of gender and morality. The novel offers a painstaking portrayal of the rise of religious fundamentalism, resulting loss of civil liberties, and the endemic spirit of fear and bigotry that prevailed in society. The opposition to sectarian extremism and imposition of Islamization are the major thematic issues in the novel and are mainly reflected through the behavior and beliefs of the main character, Arif. In the case of Arif, the conflict has a personal and professional dimension of great depth. He is a history teacher who, as such, believes in a subtle and heterogeneous historiography and is therefore forced to produce a falsified

curriculum. His unwillingness to comply is a head-on collision with not only the political agenda of the state but also the extremist actors that support this political agenda. The novel reflects the presence of such an ideological confrontation in everyday life, in the relations between people, and in the artistic work. Arif resists the ongoing delivery of unauthorized historical information to his pupils, with all the dangers that accompany this information, his way of indirectly promoting critical thinking as opposed to the blind acceptance of propaganda as issued by the government. This pedagogical gesture is a strong denial of the efforts of the regime to monopolize knowledge and collective memory. The artistic and cultural opposition, which is represented in Urdu poetry and music, is an important channel of opposition between Arif and his intellectual peers. In an atmosphere of widespread censorship, poetry provides a subversive channel of ideological contrarianism and emotional catharsis. The fact that Arif loves poetry and the epistolary character of his love affair exemplify a human domain that is privative and impenetrable by the state. There is a personal and moral stand, that is reflected when Arif defies all odds by continuing to stand his ground even when he is threatened. The fact that in a world of universal moral decay, he still managed to be a person of integrity is another indication of some kind of resistance based on identity. *The History Teacher of Lahore* shows that the struggle against the religious extremists supported by the state is not carried out solely by means of great gestures but is also carried out by routine disobedience. The novel argues that intellectual integrity, artistic speech, and human integrity are powerful tools through which one can resist an oppressive government.

Conclusion

The analysis of sectarianism in Tahira Naqvi's *The History Teacher of Lahore* (2024), through Vali Nasr's political theory, has shed light on the complex web of sectarian constructions within the context of power dynamics and the subjugation of religious minorities. Throughout this study, we have seen how this literary work explores the subtleties of power dynamics, religious fundamentalism for political interests, and the religious minorities subjected to death. Religion is used as a tool to reconstruct Pakistan as an Islamic State rather than a Muslim nation, so this study identifies how the political leaders change the historical facts and distort the textbooks to raise the feeling of patriotism among the students and the young. Arif often worked as an activist by saving the lives of Christians who faced persecution as a result of barbarous blasphemy laws. This study shows how the religious minorities suffer from the terror of death and being caught, and being treated as others in the wake of the imposition of brutal laws. Public floggings were held as a cautionary example for people. The era of the 1980s is discussed in detail when certain regressive laws and punishments were introduced to make the state an Islamic State. Naqvi uses the microcosm of a classroom to emphasize some of the intimate forms in which political ideologies are transformed into cultural lives. Islamization did not only involve legislation, it also involved the reinterpretation of the cultural practices, codes of morality, and historical consciousness of the common citizen. Islamization that has been incurred and is supposed to make the Muslim identity stronger has actually diluted the pluralism and caused the non-Muslim groups' gross suffering. Pakistan is also destabilized because of the exclusion of minorities, which affects the whole Pakistani national identity. The state has discredited its own promise of equal treatment by reducing citizenship to conformity to religion.

References

- Anwar, W. (2024, August 23). De-historicizing history: An unpardonable sin. *The Aleph Review*. <https://www.thealephreview.com/post/de-historicizing-history-an-unpardonable-sin>
- Aslam, I. (2024, February 25). History teacher is based on real-life events. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1816846>
- Hashemi, N. (2015, October 27). *Toward a political theory of sectarianism in the Middle East: The salience of authoritarianism over theology*. Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/toward-political-theory-sectarianism-middle-east-salience-authoritarianism-over-theology>
- Ispahani, F. (2017). *Purifying the land of the pure: A history of Pakistan's religious minorities*. Oxford University Press.
- Khan, F. I. (2024, May 18). On reading Tahira Naqvi's *the history teacher of Lahore*. *The Friday Times*. <https://thefridaytimes.com/18-May-2024/on-reading-tahira-naqvi-s-the-history-teacher-of-lahore>
- Mandal, S. (2024, February 21). Book review: *The history teacher of Lahore* by Tahira Naqvi. *Borderless Journal*. <https://borderlessjournal.com/2024/02/21/the-history-teacher-of-lahore-by-tahira-naqvi/>
- Nasr, S. V. R. (2001). *Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the making of state power*. Oxford University Press.
- Nasr, V. (2006). *The Shia revival: How conflicts within Islam will shape the future*. W. W. Norton & Company, 251-252.
- Newsweek Pakistan*. (2016, April 28). Mourning the unthinkable. <https://www.newsweekpakistan.com/mourning-the-unthinkable/>
- Sidhu, M. (2025, August 13). Tahira Naqvi's *the history teacher of Lahore*: Polarizing chapter from Pakistan. *The Tribune*.