Ziauddin Sardar: The *New Muslim Man* Seeking his Paradise[i]

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Abstract: The life and works of Ziauddin Sardar, rooted in his Pakistani and British upbringing, encompass a wide spectrum of subjects including autobiographical treatises along with searchlight on Orientalism, Post-Modernity, Muslim Diaspora, Future Studies, and the U.S. foreign policies. While traversing through his numerous writings, this article benefits from a first-hand interaction with the eminent British Muslim writer spanning three decades as it assesses his diverse interests and intellectual contributions. Zia's writings, lectures, editorial work and organisational activities situate him in the vanguard of a new and dynamic Muslim scholarship that refuses to be objectified and advances the intellectual profile of several pertinent discourses impacting communities across the world.

-Britain, Islam, Pakistan, Muslims, Salman Rushdie, Quran, Mecca, Muslim Institute, *Critical Muslim*.

Ziauddin Sardar (hereafter Zia) embodies numerous personalities varying from an academic to an orator and from an original thinker to a contrarian critic, whose role as the author of multiple works converges with that of an institution builder. I had heard about Zia for quite some time even when, following my doctoral degree in 1979, I taught in Pakistan for the next decade. Of course, the major contemporary news was the Iranian revolution and the Mujahideen fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Iran's ayatollahs had created unease in the West especially in the United States following the siege of its Embassy and unending denunciation by Khomeini (d.1989) of "two devils" up in the northern regions. Pakistan itself was under a totalitarian dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq (d.1988), who had unleashed a reign of terror on civil society and was shunned by everyone in the West until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Overnight, the hitherto forsaken dictator and repressive Islamist became a close ally for helping fight a sanctified war against the evil empire. A few years later, I chanced to go back to my old university in the U.S. and my former teacher and now a dean proudly showed me his Afghan woollen pakul hat, so favourite with the Jihadis and their aficionados elsewhere. These were challenging times when schisms within the Muslim polities had begun to converge with the East-West polarities

further squeezing space for civic groups. The daily fatalities from an enduring Iraq-Iran War only further underlined the aimless killings amidst the pervasive Muslim helplessness and despondency. With this growingly volatile backdrop, some Muslim writers busied themselves advocating a hyped-up but dangerously segregated Islamisation of knowledge, which they anchored on a self-assumed self-sufficiency.[ii] Concurrently, warmed up by accentuated emphasis on Islam—though not always laudatory--Zia and a few others began to rearticulate Islam's liberationist dictums without severing relations with the rest.[iii] Enthused by Imam Khomeini and Edward Said--in their own distinct ways--Zia, an erstwhile active member of the FOSIS (Federation of Student Islamic Societies) and second generation British Muslim, sought his roots beyond the given territorial/cultural (read: Pakistani) parameters without denouncing the British context. Like an overarching British identitarian paradigm, he keenly looked for a macro Islamic identity, defined on his own terms, neither too immersed in tradition, nor too irreverent to modernity. This was the milieu that certainly ushered Zia as an uneasy lodger amongst several border posts while precariously positioning him on a no man's land. He started writing for the newspapers on *desi* topics while venturing out to East Anglia or England's northwest with an iota of nostalgia of cherished holidays spent with the grandparents and uncles back in Pakistan. The Indus land and its expatriates in England—often seen by print media as a quiet, law abiding and non-intrusive community-- were then either invisible from the mainstream power structures, or simply appeared as infrequent footnotes. Zia knew that unlike the first generation immigrants, his was a different cohort--full of ideas, questions and energy and eager to define itself in a society that quite often felt at ease with its colonial clichés.[iv] Zia's journeys, both in their physical and metaphorical domains, ensued in the early 1970s and continue today with even more intensity, though no less interspersed with dismay yet with some occasional beam light as well.

Retrospectively, there are four ways to locate Zia, beginning with his early years in Pakistan skipping across the streets in southern Punjab in his *chaddi* (nickers) with Naana Hakim Sahib laying the foundational work in an otherwise fidgety soul whose ancestral roots lay in Afghanistan and the UP. Secondly, his adolescence in Hackney, often manoeuvring escapades with the bullying class fellows and imperious teachers infesting East London during the 1960s. Thirdly, we see Zia on the journey of self-discovery equipped with a university degree and pursuing a labyrinthine career in print media and through a recently launched Channel 4 where visual programmes devoted to ethnic minorities were aired, mostly in wee hours. Following that we witness the fourth and an ongoing sojourn of an inquisitive academic sleuth whose terrains crisscross Muslim vistas, both in Diaspora and in the heartlands while intently positing himself as a provocateur.

Between Balti Cuisine and Bahawalnagar:

In one of his detailed works, Zia's journey in his quest for understanding multiple identities takes him to Leicester, Birmingham and Oldham in England and turns out to be more than a search for an authentic Balti dish. In the process, he meets the pioneer restaurateurs from Bangladesh and Pakistan making substantial claims, some even amusingly suggesting the etymological origins of the name from Baltistan in northern Pakistan, though the term is a substitute for what is called the Karahi dish across the Indus lands. However, the cuisine is named Balti, much easier to pronounce, whereby the meat dish is cooked in a receptacle with a right mix of spices and herbs, to be devoured down with na'ans, themselves originating from the lands west of the Indus. While mindful of South Asian presence in Britain for a long time and especially of the Indian cookery thanks to a pioneering Dean Mahomet in 1806 in London,[v] Zia finds these cities with sizeable South Asian presence where both the Empire and the Subcontinent intertwine through their respective histories.[vi] By visiting England's former industrial heartland, Zia is, in fact, investigating the enduring

connections between the two at a time when Muslim-specific exhortations by the authorities and pundits for integration vocally reverberate: “The British Asian experience is not solely about what people from the Indian subcontinent brought with them. It is also about what they found, what they made of themselves and for themselves, as well as what Britain made of them. Identity is formed in the matrix of multiple connections and influences in which Britain plays a role of immense significance. But Britain, it seems to me, still fears difference. It is not possible to belong to nation that sees itself in terms of a narrow and exclusive identity, or feels uncomfortable with the idea of multiple identities”.[vii] Zia, in the process, detects multiple layers and strands syncretising as well as conflicting cultural mores on all sides, reaffirming his self-belief in multiculturalism.

In this identitarian twinning, Zia keeps travelling between Pakistan and Britain, the former being the place of his birth in 1951 in a refugee family from India after the Partition, and later at home where he along with his family has been living since they followed his father to East London in 1961. His memories of the formative years in Bahawalnagar and Sahiwal in Pakistan and then growing up in London amidst the harrowing skinheads and fascists help him relive the two parallel cultural periscopes. His visits to reconnect with the family ‘back home’ in southern Punjab and Karachi, especially with Naana—Mother’s Uncle, known as Hakim Sahib—and life in London let him experience two durable influences on his person. Hakim Sahib was a traditional Yunani (lit: Greek) physician who had inherited his skills and wisdom from his forbears along with a consistent knack for reading historical and detective writings in Urdu. Hakim Sahib, the eldest in the family, tutored Zia on Indian history especially the advent of the East India Company and its steady colonial acquisitions all the way from Bengal to the Revolt of 1857—that he refused to call Mutiny. In addition, the induction of allopathy under the Raj had definitely damaged the Unani and Ayurveda medical traditions in India, for which he never forgave the British*:* “Hakim Sahib loathed the

British for what they had done to his profession. He was an extremely generous and polite person who never uttered a bad word against anyone. Even when he was angry, he expressed his anger with humour and wit. But he made an exception in the case of the British. The British were *farangi*—ignorant, arrogant foreigners—an Urdu term that had wide currency during the Raj".[viii] Zia's anti-colonialism grew under Hakim Sahib's stimulus along with his own encounters in East London, followed up by a career that combined media work with serious academic pursuits at a time when racism, Islamophobia, Orientalism, critical theory and decolonial studies held their sway across.[ix]

Routing the Roots:

Zia's excursions feature probing places and meeting people—a kind of binary methodology quite popular among the journalists, yet Zia wants to dwell deeper than the apparent nuances. For instance, AbdoolKarim Vakil, a London academic and a common friend intrigues him both by his name and for his tri-continental pedigrees. Vakil comes from a South Asian family of professionals with business interest in coastal areas and known as *vakils* (advocates) whose first name often happens to be Abdool (lit: slave) that Karim decides to combine with his middle name avoiding the literality of the forename. However, it is his personal background that intrigues Zia, more like his own, given the fact that Vakil's Sindhi ancestors were based in Mozambique—a Portuguese colony—while his father decided to move to Lisbon for higher education where he met Vakil's Portuguese mother who after converting to Islam acculturated herself to South Asian values. AbdoolKarim himself ended up in London as an academe, spatially a long way off from Sindh to London via Africa and Portugal. Zia's own ancestors, a few generations in the past, had migrated from Afghanistan into India, the way his extended family migrated into Pakistan, some settling in Bahawalnagar and the rest in Karachi. Zia's father, following his employment with a biscuit factory in Montgomery (now called Sahiwal) in Pakistani Punjab, moved to London. Thus,

like every other South Asian, they carried some form of *Indianness* within though in a cultural sense since, as per Vakil's corrective, "India as a unified monolithic nation was a British invention. Indeed, the whole concept of Indian nationalism is a legacy of the Raj". One may partially agree with Vakil that colonialism as a harbinger of European modernity intentionally caused a sense of nationhood amongst many Indians since greater mobility, education, professionalization and official categorisation created the sense of a collective belonging that became India per se. Zia finds multiple forms of Indianness and that of Britishness in Scotland where he is taken on a tour of Glasgow by a Pakistani-Scot, Suhayl Saadi and his wife, Alina Mirza. Like Zia's forbears, Suhayl's grandfather was an Afghan, though the family had lived in Hindustan until Saadi's parents migrated to Hull before moving into Glasgow. Suhayl, like his late father, is a doctor and a novelist though not happy on two counts: his literary talents like those of several others north of the borders are not fully recognised by the counterparts in south, whereas many Asians in England do not realise the fact that they have a sizeable presence in Scotland. A descendant of Sadozai tribe of Afghans on his mother side, Suhayl had mutated his family name to Saadi, which reminds Zia of the famous thirteenth century Persian sage, Sheikh Saadi, though he is no less intrigued by Suhayl's multiple identities. Following the Partition, his father worked in the refugee camps in Lahore, where he met Suhayl's mother, Afza Sultana, herself a volunteer. They moved to Britain in 1955 and kept visiting Pakistan on regular basis for the next two decades until it became sparse as the time went along. Perhaps the first generation Pakistanis, like other expatriates always yearned to return but only few of them could. Children, properties and health imperatives deterred repatriation though many professionals such as the Nobel Laureate, Professor Abdul Salam would blame the authorities for not being keen on utilising their expertise.[x] However, Rasheed Araeen, an artiste and a publisher would visit Pakistan

each December for decades though had initially ventured into Britain searching for "modernity he had hoped and longed for".[xi]

Zia's experience at the Brooke House School proves a mixture of attainments and disappointments. He considers himself a sharp pupil but is often in contestation with the History teacher, Mr Brilliant, whose teaching was soaked in an imperial nostalgia bordering on casual racism. Building upon his knowledge gained from Hakim Sahib back in Pakistan, Zia would challenge his teacher on contentious issues in Indian history much to the latter's consternation resulting into frequent canning, or expulsion from the class. That kind of boldness anchoring on bluntness and coached in defiance appears to be a lifelong feature of his persona that comes alive often in seminars, group discussions and at international immigration counters. The struggle for survival remains the hallmark of every immigrant, occasionally helping the person excel the rest and that is what Zia might have found in his early years in London, itself going through changes while defying racism at several levels. While working for the Asian programme for a British channel, Zia undertook a visit to Bradford that allowed him to witness first-hand realities of a northern town at the cusp of change. A large-scale Pakistani community of Mirpuris lived in specific localities in and around this former textile industry town; mutually close knit yet segregated from the rest. Zia also notices the intra-community divisions based on *biradari*—the extended family system--since the pattern of the migrations from Azad Kashmir had been as such, often owing to cousin marriages and belonging to the same locality. Those patterns had somehow survived in diaspora yet faced new strains and challenges from within and the outside with education, professionalism, generational and gender based choices and official policies moulding social patterns among these British Asians. Zia seems to have accepted Muhammad Anwar's premise that the first generation, despite an element of nostalgia for "back home", was already rooted in their new homes with *return* existing only as a residual myth.[xii] Still, he

finds these people quite resilient drawing their sustenance "from their different worlds, as well as the flexibility and dexterity of tradition, {which} never fails to surprise me".[xiii]

Like other economic immigrants, Zia's family had to struggle hard to begin life from a scratch in a new land and the family gained upward mobility quite gradually with the sheer hard labour by his parents. From a rented room accommodating an entire family, they moved into a flat in Hackney before settling in a house in Colindale. All along, Zia remained curious about the life of his grandfather, Ahmad Ullah Khan, who had expired in 1934 leaving behind an infant, Salahuddin Khan Sardar, Zia's father. Salahuddin did not talk much about his late father which made Zia even more curious about his Da'ada (paternal grandfather), until he found a collection of certificates and honours that Ahmad Ullah Khan had earned in his life as a decorated soldier in the British Indian Army. Like his Mirpuri cohorts, Zia's own cultural roots in the Indus regions are further solidified when in his next visit to Pakistan, he agrees to marry his cousin, Saleha, in Bahawalnagar—a festive reunion for the entire extended family with Hakim Sahib leading most ceremonies. Saleha ensures this east-west matrimonial relationship whereas Zia dwells deeper into schisms between the two enlarging his academic canvass to Islam and the West where forces such as Orientalism continue with their demolition job. Zia, an emerging British Muslim writer, had no turning back from the Indus land: "Pakistan made me whole again. The love and passion of my relatives, the humanity of ordinary people I encountered, suggested that the parts of my being moulded in Pakistan were just as valuable as those shaped in Britain. I comprehended I was British and Asian and would ever remain both—simultaneously," thus Zia assessed his own *locus standi*.[xiv] And when his daughter, Maha, arrived, he discovered an Asian father within himself, trying to find a synthesis between his two cultural groundings and in the process, unearthed a New Muslim Man.

Issues of dual identities with their own respective pulls—often not without dissension and tensions—keep Zia engrossed in substantial dialogues with his contemporaries like Lord Bhiku Parekh, and Ashis Nandy, the Indian social critic. Nandy's searchlight on colonial paternalism for the Indians and the rest synchronises with Zia's own critique of the Raj and its political and racialized cultural baggage with lasting imprints. Parekh, instead, would speak for Diasporic generations when he spearheaded multiculturalism. To Nandi, Robert Clive, Adam Ferguson, William Jones, James Mill, Thomas Babington Macaulay, John Stewart Mills and Rudyard Kipling—among several—consistently and emphatically projected India lost in a time warp with its childlike inhabitants needing colonial cum Christian deliverance to break free of this civilizational stalemate. However, while millions of Indians like Ahmad Ullah Khan had shouldered Britain's imperial enterprises—often selflessly—their descendants were finding it difficult to seek even that basic recognition in the colonial heartland, where the former had come to contribute once again towards its general wellbeing. To Zia, the dichotomy predates the Asian migration to Britain, as the colonials formed their hierarchical attitudes during their heyday in India, and possibly the colonised intermediaries were taken for a proverbial ride: "If Ahmad Ullah Khan became modern he soon found, according to the systematic practice of the British in India, that he was only second-class modern."[xv] Zia never feels short on his Britishness nor did the younger Asians who vented their frustration through different means inclusive of confronting the British National Party in northern English towns. Following his work with the media during the 1990s, Zia travelled to those cities where riots had taken place, with the police often coming harder on British Asians, whose issues were largely socio-economic, exacerbated by the systemic racism. Of course, religion was venturing in as a gelling factor amongst the ethnic and caste driven Asian communities yet unemployment and lack of collective esteem proved the driving factors, in some cases leading to gang culture much to the discomfort of

the first generation immigrants. 9/11 happened a few months after the centenarian Hakim Sahib's death and took everyone by surprise though the British government, like its counterparts in Washington and elsewhere, refused to acknowledge pervasive anger over interventionist policies in Muslim countries. However, critical Muslims such as Zia would spotlight the radicalising role played by clerics such as Omar Bakri, Abu Hamza al-Masari and Abu Qatada who found listening ears among several British Muslims through their mosque-based contacts. Zia would hold Deobandi ulama'a and Tablighis responsible for adding fuel to subterranean dismay among the Muslim youths besides pushing them to a segregationist fundamentalism. Despite the fact that most British Muslims of South Asian origins subscribed to Sufi practices, the Rushdie affair[xvi] and then the resentment over British foreign policy exacerbated their introversion, as Zia reminds his readers in a telling way: "The idea that the West is out to get us has a deep hold on the Muslim subconsciousness. If you believe that the world is divided into 'the abode of Islam' and 'the abode of infidels', as many puritans do, then the assumption that the rest of the world is against you comes naturally, and little room is left for argument".[xvii] That is what makes Zia and Parekh underline the urgency for a fresher perspective that could feed into intercultural relations without prioritising one kind of culture upon the rest along with deterring people from amnesia and indifference.

Searching for Paradise: Between a revered Past and the Critical Future:

Islamophobia might have gained new currency on its erstwhile racist and colonialist roots thanks to revolution in Iran and then the Rushdie Affair, yet it also launched a new and even vigorous career for Zia. Paired with Merryl Davies, a like-minded Welsh Muslim,[xviii] the duo were to author several volumes together besides institution building such as the Muslim Institute, Annual Winter Gathering, Ibn Rushd Lecture Series and certainly the journal--*Critical Muslim.*[xix] During the period resounding with Post-modernism, Zia found himself on

the side of its critics by positing it yet another manifestation of Hydra-like modernity.[xx] Ziauddin Sardar and Akbar S. Ahmed, two London-based contemporaries, in their own distinct ways, were interacting with Post-modernism while eliciting a fresher look at Islam as a historic paradigm, both impacted and misunderstood by powerful Western echelons.[xxi]Zia's capers with his multi-faceted identitarian moorings would never let him sit in ease with any single one solely since he keeps probing and even daring each of them. Zia refused to accept Post-modernism as a critical assault on uncritiqued modernity and instead saw in it a further marginalisation of the post-colonial countries and communities, suppressing their voices and contributions through a new hegemonic narrative.[xxii] On a macro intellectual level, as a Muslim and independent Third Worldist, he not only subscribes to Saidian prognosis of Orientalism as the proverbial elephant in the room, he even expands it while drawing some newer empiricism from media portrayals and Diaspora case studies. To him, Orientalist discourse based on power centricity, *othering* and demonization of the non-West has its roots in medieval times, much earlier than the European colonialism, and in contemporary era, it has assumed even more effective tentacles. Using evidence from the print media, television programmes and data from the CDs, Zia's analysis of this discourse takes Said's paradigm to certain unexplored realms. This happened at a time when Zia found himself steeped in cultural studies and futuristics—the former often seen to be the brain child of Stuart Hall (1932-2014) whereas futuristics has had its own antecedents including some chequered past in Germany. Hall's academic innovation was suffused in anti-colonialism and anti-racism while benefitting from his Marxist inclination and erstwhile work by Raymond Williams aimed at empowering underprivileged communities.[xxiii] Zia's writings, not enamoured of Huntingtonian clash of cultures, premised themselves on structural imbalances among cultures often going back to the past, and still feeding into discriminatory postulations. Zia's works, like Hall's, wanted to divest elitist monopoly over defining and directing cultures

often rooted in a stark distrust of masses, but unlike the latter, he looked at Science and not the proletariat as a redeemer in creating greater consciousness about equality and interdependence among cultures.[xxiv] While working with Araeen on the journal, *The Third Text*, Zia would also contribute a series of graphic studies on Islam, Cultural Studies, Chaos, Mathematics and Media affirming the role of a polymath seeking interface between Science, Reason and Religion, to construct a future-oriented discourse. Zia's early ebullience for cultural studies might have been slightly over-emphasised since the subject took off at Western universities in the late 1990s to dive down within a few years. It engendered some enthusiasm as a defiant academic challenge that would focus on little voices in history while flagging gender issues and non-Western discourses, yet all those areas were subsumed either by Critical Theory or appropriated by media studies given the IT revolution and resultant levelling in Humanities. Zia was instrumental in raising funds to organise a pioneering conference on futuristics in Islamabad in the 1990s expecting scholars from India and other post-colonial regions but was disappointed to encounter a celebrity-led fanfare where his co-sponsors prioritised social networking rather than ensuring wider participation. Zia's presidential address—delayed by unnecessary protocols—happened quite late and was too short, followed by his exit from the conference in protest against sycophancy.[xxv]

Zia felt doubly aghast given the fact that he had never denied his Pakistani roots to the extent of visiting Scarthorpe to study the rural English origins of Ian Botham, the cricketer, who in a tour of Pakistan had caused quite some controversy by saying that Pakistan was "the kind of place to send your mother-in-law for a month, all expenses paid". His tour of a rather drab village and encounter with the locals to write a commissioned piece allowed this Londoner to witness provincialism in England, more as he would notice it anywhere else.[xxvi]Another of Zia's nonchalant encounter with a securitised form of provincialism happened during his post-9/11 visit to the United States soon after the publication of *Why Do*

People Hate America? The volume, co-authored by Merryl Davies and critical of American foreign policies in the main, was being launched in the United States amidst the hyped up Muslim profiling and long delays and extra checks for Muslim visitors. The publishers and promoters, understandably, wanted the volume to remain hidden from prying eyes so that the British-Pakistani author may not fall foul of the American Customs. Still, Zia was detained for three hours at the JFK Airport until he decided to confront an official out of exasperation about his being a known author including his recent book on the United States. To his surprise, instead of frowning, the official let him go through the immigration. It reminded our author of the dinner he had with General Zia-ul-Haq, soon after the publication of *Desperately Seeking for Paradise*, where he had described the general "a deranged dictator". The general read out the portion at the dinner table, much to the shock of everyone yet showed no rancour to Zia and instead attributed such characterisation to his critics being ill informed about Islamisation in his country.[xxvii] Such frustrating moments take Zia back to his extended family where Hakim Sahib and maternal uncles such as Farid Mammun and Waheed Mammun shower him with valuable affection. Hakim Sahib in Bahawalnagar and the uncles in Karachi embody a tradition that makes Zia even more critical of a vainglorious and often shallow modernity. To him, a drummed up Western uprighteousness and authoritarianism in the name of Islam present arduous and troublesome dual agonies that he can only avoid by seeking the company of near ones. Despite being a product and harbinger of rationality, Zia never seemed to encompass the apparent waywardness of his Uncle Waheed whose sudden appearances and disappearances across the labyrinthine journeys occurred so frequently. For some observers in Karachi, Waheed might have been a clueless soul while to others he was a Sufi who helped the downtrodden without turning into a Pakistani Robin Hood. No wonder, after his death, some of his disciples built a special tomb over his grave where throngs of men and women came with their offerings, seeking

intercession. Perhaps, like other Muslim thinkers so aghast at violence in the name of Islam, Sufism, for some, appears to be a more humane alternative. It was perhaps in this state of mind, that Zia rereads Deputy Nazir Ahmed's novels—Urdu masterpieces written as moralist stories for a traditional "sisterhood"—, which despite a semblance of nostalgia invoke mixed feelings by their prescriptive rejection of modern education. Ahmed (1830-1920) with his *Miratal Uroos* (The Bride's Mirror), is in fact viewed as the pioneer novelist in Urdu. Here, Zia is at ease with modernity since it allows needed empowerment and self-confidence rather than a limiting rigmarole within the confines of a home. Zia is aware of the popularity of *Beheshti Zaiwar*, a doctrinaire book of manners for women anchored on dismissal of modernity and any role outside the domestic chores. Its author, Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863-1943), like Zia's parents was from the UP, who in tandem with the novelist, Ahmed, worried about modernist encroachments on Muslim family life under the aegis of a formidable Raj. Popular among traditional lower middle class Muslim families in South Asia and Diaspora, these two books were given to brides in dowry by their parents and Zia happened to read them during his youthful days in Hackney thanks to a prying female Auntie, Khala Rashida.[xxviii]

It is not just Urdu novels and Bollywood classics that engulf Zia's attention as denizens of tradition, his immersion in Urdu poetry remains a lifelong passion, which might have multiplied in Diaspora owing to dwindling number of poets and *mushaira'as* (recital sessions). Poetry gatherings, other than being literary contests, are great socialisers and levellers where poets and audience seek ingenuity in wordsmithry and nuanced imagery. Poets and audience become one and the same when absorbing rhythmic verses on topics varying from love to mysticism, and from felicitation to pangs of separation and death. Beloved could be divine or mundane but never without delicate and often ambivalent nuances, yet the lover persists with an eternal quest and adulation. At Muslim Institute's

annual winter gatherings in Salisbury, such recitals have been a notable feature but Zia's most memorable mushaira'a happened at the Pakistani consulate in Jeddah where the former was based during his Saudi interregnum. Here, in 1979, three eminent Urdu poets, Ihsan Daanish, Hafeez Jallundhri and Mahirul Qadri presented their best poems before an adoring audience, yet Qadri passed away on the stage right after reciting one of his telling compositions. In fact, these three senior poets had been dilating on the theme of separation and grief, when death visited one of them.[xxix]

Modernist Muslim, a Neo-Muta'azili, or a Troublemaker[xxx]:

Zia vacillates between Britain and Pakistan the way he traverses between apparently exclusive domains of science, media, faith and literature. He adores the Indus land where he spent his early happy and innocuous years and which he would encounter with his senior relatives during his subsequent visits, yet over the decades that Pakistan fell afoul of favour owing to dictators, bureaucratic inertia and time serving leaders. In the same vein, he is not totally at ease with Britain, which often defines him as the *other,* or an ethno-cultural aberration whose culture, colour, class and creed lodge him on the periphery. Such a juddering attitude nudges him more towards Islam, which in his early student life was presumably pristine and liberationist but no less misunderstood intently or inadvertently as the Rushdie Affair or such other long-standing legacies displayed. Not very comfortable with the Islam of narrow-minded clerics and authoritarian clairvoyants, Zia defines his Islam, stripped of denigration and uncritiqued apologia. By writing illustrated manuals on Islam, Zia would delve deeper into areas like Logic and Science, a fuller understanding of Quranic hermeneutics, working and researching in Malaysia with fellow writers and then settling back in London reincarnating the Muslim Institute amidst publishing volumes on the Quran, Mecca and a more up-to-date autobiography besides editing *CM.* Zia's academic explorations, irrespective of their thematic diversity, liaise with the Muslim past and present

with faith offering the main underlay whereby the author himself is a seeker, debater and critic to the extent of turning into a contrarian. Mostly working from home, his interlocutors find it easier to involve him in pursuits, often with high-sounding and no less idealist ventures purported to improve the thinking and collective lives of Muslim Ummah, seeking its own destiny and a promised paradise. For instance, while living in East London, a younger Zia receives an unannounced visit by two Tablighis, who are able to persuade a curious and amenable Muslim youth to go with them to Dewsberry to attend the annual Tabligh Conference. Emphasising the 'right way of performing prayers' and living a more puritanical life, his Tablighi mentors take a longer route to collect some more Muslims on the way including a Scottish woman convert. Following the annual gathering, Zia is further persuaded to join the Tabligh tour of Glasgow, as is customary with the organisation. He goes through the rigmarole of attending sermons and visiting neighbourhoods seeking more 'recruits' much like himself, but is growingly uncomfortable with the simplistic and adrift solutions to Ummah's gigantic challenges. Zia is quizzical of these missionaries who have sought long absences from their families and professions at places like Pakistan to guide fellow Muslims abroad whereas they could do much more while staying within their own homeland. His disillusionment, shared with the Scottish convert, proves overpowering until they forsake the Tabligh venture in its midst to head back south. While working for the FOSIS in those early years, Zia was able to develop close contacts with like-minded Muslim students from around the world who, brimming with enthusiasm, sought systemic alternatives. Concurrently, it allowed him to meet contemporary Muslim notables and activists such as Maulana Mawdudi of Pakistan, Said Ramadan of Egypt and Malcolm X, yet both the Jama'at-i-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood despaired him due to their single mindedness, marginalisation of women from their cadres and deliberations, and also for turning Islam into a sheer political ideology. Intimate knowledge about the West including challenges and opportunities for

Muslim expatriates was unknown to Mawdudi and such other Islamists, whose followers including those with better education often treated them like infallible gurus and cult figures.[xxxi] It is not just such ulama'a who despaired Zia, even Sufis turned out to be single-minded individuals creating their own aura through personality-centred rituals. During his youth, prodded by an instinctive quest, he joined a group of Sufis in his neighbourhood that included mostly British converts and held weekly sessions centring on sermons by their egotistic leader. Following a move to Norwich, the group began to identify themselves with the Murabitun of the Medieval Muslim Spain since the leader claimed to have been endowed with special spiritual powers by a Sufi in Fez. Zia even undertook a journey to Fez, whose own distinguished history and urban contours impressed him the most, contrasted with a disappointing experience of encountering some so-called spiritual outfits. Zia never devalues the genuine Sufis of the past including Rabia Basri, Bayazid Bistami, Abdul Qadir Gilani and the rest, but is not enamoured of their more recent disciples who end up making their followers even more passive and completely irreverent towards diligence and mundane responsibilities. As was witnessed in the case of his own brother, these latter-day gurus would gradually come to control the lives of their disciples making them marry women selected by them and even compelling them to forsake their jobs to become "otherworldly".

It is not just the Sufis, Salafis and Tablighis who offer reductionist and even dangerous panacea to Muslim predicament of being lodged between a devil and the deep sea, even the educated amongst them along with the power elite turn out to be self-serving. Malady multiplies when Muslims are denied justice and instead feel frustrated by cumbersome and often inefficient administrative set-ups, as was witnessed first-hand by Zia in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Syria and Malaysia. Zia, in his early quest for some positive vibes of a possible Muslim regeneration, decided to visit the Middle East by travelling to Iran that turned out to be a circuitous voyage across the bitter realities of statist

totalitarianism, innately inimical to societal imperatives. This first sojourn to Iran in 1974 mainly aimed at exploring Shah's unbound modernisation programme besides visiting Alamut, the past abode of the Assassins. Zia's Iranian companion, Reza, drives him to the medieval stronghold in the Alborz Mountain yet gets annoyed when they talk about Sunni-Sh'ii discord. Abandoned by the roadside, a desperate Zia ends up seeking a ride with a chain smoking trucker, who to our author's chagrin, was, in fact, hauling flammable gasoline in his tanker. From Iran, following similar hilarious rides, Zia ends up in Iraq where he happens to witness first-hand brutal practices of the Ba'athist regime led by Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein. Baghdad, since the lapse of its Ottoman times, had changed rapidly through colonial recalibrations that hinged on imperial interests and tribal confederacy, all driven by partisan interests. The series of so-called revolutions in the name of nationalism and socialism and a perfidious usage of Islam to keep the country together had egregiously bruised its body politic. Zia, while looking for the vestiges of the Baghdad's past glory such as the Abbasid palaces and Mustansariya madrassa, is suddenly confronted with the arrival of Iraqi soldiers closing down shops and cafes as the motorcade of the dictators is to negotiate the neighbourhood. Like Iran's sleuths and sectarian fanatics, Iraq's tribulations at the hands of an oppressive regime prompt him to leave Baghdad, idealised since his childhood as the fulcrum of Muslim golden age. A disgusted Zia boards the bus to visit Hafez al-Assad's Syria where the brutal murder of an Ikhwani in stark daylight compels him to shift towards a comparatively safer Jordan run by the Hashemite kingdom. Outside Amman, he visits the Palestinian camp where, Nabil Harish, a Pakistan-trained Palestinian doctor is trying to revive hope amongst hundreds of thousands of refugees dislocated by the 1967 War. Zia's initial optimism gives way to despair when confronted with huddled masses living in temporary tin-roofed hovels with the younger students nursing the idea of eventual return to their ancestral homeland. Not seeing much hope with the contrasts in a sedate urban Muslim capital,

neighboured by despondent slums, Zia leaves for Dubai, still an unknown fishing village. Here, he is further disgusted with the superficiality and dual standards personally experienced when he turns up in a run-of-the-mill outfit looking scruffy and is rudely shooed away from a minister's residence. The next day, dressed up in his best, Zia is smoothly allowed in though the conversation about the future research imperatives for Ummah remains overshadowed by minister's accented penchant for his dog. Zia's physical and mental journey across the Muslim heartland is a plethora of disappointment where totalitarianism rules the roost disallowing any space for creativity, yet as a younger person, he is still searching the saplings of some Muslim Renaissance, if not a full-fledged paradise. "The desire of ordinary Muslims to live in a state of justice and equity was always at odds with the elite vision of an ideal life. I knew my own quest would be shaped by this clash," he surmises insouciantly following his first sojourn.[xxxii]

In 1975, Zia, along with a few other expatriate Muslim professionals, found himself in Saudi Arabia to work at the Hajj Research Centre, aimed at gaining first-hand information about the expectations and logistical prerogatives of the pilgrims, underpinned by empirical research and scientific data. Yet he is again destined to receive a cold shoulder from the authorities, who instead, motivated by Wahhabism and geared by oil money exhibit nil reverence for historical traditions and past vestiges in their country. Exceptional Hijazi individuals such as Abdullah Naseef with their immersion in Muslim cosmopolitanism, are often unable to move the official rigidity and clerical obstinacy, which equipped with petrodollars and Wahhabist rejectionism suffers from a 'couldn't care less' kind of attitude, often directed against fellow non-Saudi Muslims. Zia and his associates are horrified the way modernist architectural structures and multi-lane motorways emerge in Mecca to zero in on Kaaba and its surroundings with complete irreverence for historical sites, but his exiting out of the kingdom proves even more arduous owing to a callous bureaucratic rigmarole. Even

Naseeb's intervention is unable to get him the required exit document and he has to leave the country in surreptitious circumstances. Mecca remains "unsaved" but Zia begins to nurse some hope with the rumblings in nearby Iran where Shah's fledgling autocracy and unbound Westernism face formidable challenge from the Islamic and Leftist constellations. In the United Kingdom, Kalim Siddiqui, a former *Guardian* staffer and now a supporter of Imam Khomeini, takes Zia, Ghiayasuddin Siddiqui and a few other FOSIS alumni under his wings to plan a rescue for Ummah via Qom.[xxxiii] Over endless biryani helpings and carrot puddings, post-Shah Iran offers hope to a naïve group of British Muslims led by Siddiqui until rumbling news of a new form of totalitarianism begin to bother a quizzical Zia. Siddiqui, with access to Qom and funds from Iran, is unrelenting in his support for Ayatollahs and no less forgiving to Zia's irksome questions about gender rights, pluralism and hostage taking. Thrown out of Siddiqui's house in Slough, Zia decides to revisit Iran in 1980—a journey that results into his own internment in Tehran, where he is characterised as a British agent by the sleuths. His captors, intent on expelling him, eventually escort him to a Pakistani airliner heading for Karachi with the revolution turning out to be another pipedream for our critical observer. For the next few years, Zia is publishing *Inquiry*, a magazine purported to raise debate among Muslim thinkers on the lines of a quest for a way-out from an oppressive modernity and a coercive (Muslim) authoritarianism. History repeats itself and Zia is again approached by Naseef, now the Secretary General of the World Muslim League, for some urgent meetings in Saudi Arabia and beyond. Forgetting his previous experience, Zia finds himself in Mecca where Wasiullah Khan, the founder-chancellor of Chicago's East-West University convinces him to augur the Centre of Policy and Future Studies, funded by Naseef's organisation.

Harrowing developments such as the siege of Kaaba and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—both occurring in the closing weeks of 1979—and the beginning of a taxing Iraq-Iran War added to the urgency of revaluating state of affairs in the Muslim world with

some suggesting Islamisation of knowledge. By now Zia, with a global profile as a Muslim author and public figure in his own right, begins a whirlwind of addressing conferences on the subject though not so sure about koshering academic disciplines to make them *Islamic.* In fact, Ismael Raji al-Faruki, a Palestinian academic at Temple University, was the main proponent of this premise, which found followings across the Muslim world especially among its authoritarian rulers. Sadly, a deranged individual killed Pennsylvania-based Palestinian professor and his wife in 1986 and Zia-Faruki divergences remained unresolved. Naseef and Zia, along with other colleagues visited Pakistan and China, with Zia finding time to travel to Madrassa Al-Haqqania in Akora Khattak and some known Hui mosques in Beijing. Al-Haqqania was headed by Maulana Samiul Haq (d. 2018), a Deobandi Pashtun scholar, who had trained a number of Muslims in Southwest Asia including Mullah Omar of Afghanistan, and fervently believed in a purist version of Islam. This was the time when Afghanistan's Mujahideen leaders and their associates such as Osama bin Laden were based in Peshawar, though Zia could foresee the advent of militant Islamism on the horizons given his parleys with the warriors in the city. In China, Zia finds some space for Muslims in the decade following the Gang of Four, yet like elsewhere is worried over a shared idealism for Shariah, which to him remains a rather easy but no less consequential alibi for the Ummah. Zia is as much shocked by the poverty of Chinese rural Muslim communities as he is by the voluntary offer for marriage by a lady who thought she was absolutely right given her understanding of Shariah's permissibility of polygamy: "I had finally reached a firm conclusion: without reforming the Shariah, which actually amounts to reformulating Islam itself, a humane earthly paradise will always elude Muslim societies".[xxxiv] Zia's discomfort with Islamism, among other factors, owes to its totalitarianism, as is his critique of modernity, which has often been the cause of rootlessness and discord in post-colonial societies. His reservations against secularism could be traced back to formidable reservations

against modernity, which he often views strictly as Westernism. The Rushdie Affair further beefed up his criticism of high-sounding liberals and of the book burning, self-flagellating Muslims—two extremes of similar intensity espousing self-attributed righteousness. Still, he finds Rushdie quite a vicious opportunist who knew what he was doing by tailoring history to suit his own sadistic outlay, that not only hurt Muslims, it equally provided racists and neo-Orientalists a sought-after pleasure to club Islam: "What was it about *The Satanic Verses* that upset me so much? I had no objection to Rushdie interrogating and severely criticising Islam even in fiction. Indeed, I had been doing just that most of my life. What I, and most Muslims, took exception to was Rushdie's deliberate attempt to rewrite the life of Prophet Muhammad in an exceptionally abusive and obscene way".[xxxv]

Zia found new energy and foci in post-9/11 era though his reservations against Islamism and its militant and intolerant manifestations never diminished, and like other Muslim clusters seeking engagement rather than clash, he saw fundamentalisms of similar kind turning the world upside down.[xxxvi] Soon, Zia reenergised his efforts on his favourite dual fronts: publications and collective initiatives, and the result has been several more volumes and an altogether new and co-optative Muslim think tank. The various issues of *Critical Muslim* have consistently broadened the themes in a larger human and cosmological context besides allowing a diversity of views and inquiries from a wide variety of contributors—not always Muslim by birth or creed. Zia's book on the Quran[xxxvii] was followed by a historical biography of Mecca,[xxxviii] once again affirming that a post-colonial Zia is rooted in his Muslim traditions without severing his physical and intellectual esconcement in the Western heartland, along with trying to find a balancing point between both these powerful but no less complex trajectories. In his search for a humane, dynamic and self-confident Islam, Zia encountered experiences of mixed nature with several enduring shocks and personal setbacks but he never gave up. From his sessions with Hakim Sahib in

Depaulpur to skinheads-infested East End, followed by the study of colonial turpitude, his censorial approach towards modernity remains undiminished without ever offloading its positive attributes. However, he is equally sensitive to the fact that he is a child of modernity and not just a neutral spectator inhabiting some imaginary void. His Pakistani identity may have its own moments of boisterous humour and hierarchies within an extended family setting, along with uneasy encounters with General Zia-ul-Haq and the Taliban's mentors, yet he never forsakes the land and its humane virtues rooted in austerity. A wider Muslim Ummah comes around with a dishful of contradictions and reductionism, yet the idealism of several of its denizens over and above totalitarian and conformist proclivities keeps him on the course. It is certainly a journey of a modern Muslim, no less critical and no less troublesome—the epithets our author uses for himself with no penitence or pretence.

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[i] I have adduced the sub-title from Zia's own book, where he talks about changes in his life following the birth of his daughter, bringing out "the Asian father in me". Ziauddin Sardar, ***Balti Britain: A Journey through the British Asian Experience*** (London: Granta, 2008), 175.

[ii] Of course, Professor Ismael Raji Al-Faruki (1921-1986) felt that the Muslim aspects of learning and intellectual heritage were missing from the contemporary scholarship including in many post-colonial Muslim states, and thus tried to re-orientate the focus in a co-optive way. For Faruki's works, see Imtiyaz Yusuf, (ed.) ***Ismael Al Faruki: Selected Writings*** (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Society, 2021). Professor Akbar S. Ahmed and a few other Muslim scholars rather went beyond Faruki's formulations for a balanced relationship between knowledge and Islam, and instead attempted for separate and not often persuasive niches for different disciplines.

[iii] See, Farid Esack, ***Qura'n, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Inter-religious Solidarity against Oppression*** (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1996).

[iv] Saeed Ur-Rehman, "Intellectuals and Specificities: A Study of Post-colonial Knowledge Production by Ziauddin Sardar, Akbar S. Ahmed and Sara Suleri", PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2004; also, Wai-Yip Ho, "Crossing the Cultural Divide between Muslim and Non-Muslim: Formation of Ambassadorial Identity", *Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture,* Vol. 11, I, (2005), 5-19.

[v] Mahomet, an employee of the East India Company, first landed in 1784 at Cork in Ireland where his former commanding officer had based himself after returning from India.

Educating himself in early mythologies, the Indian Muslim had to convert to Anglicanism to marry his Irish partner. It was here in Cork that he published his book of *Travels,* making him the first Indian to write a volume in English. He opened his Hindustani Coffee House in London's Portland Square for the former colonials before moving to Brighton to establish hot baths featuring Indian herbal treatment. For more on his life and works, see Michael Fisher (ed.), ***The Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey through India*** (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997); also, Mona Narain, "Narrative of Alterity", ***Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,*** Vol. 49, No. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer, 2009), pp. 693-716; and, Gulfishan Khan, ***Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West during the Eighteenth Century*** (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[vi] "Dean and Jane Mohamet worked hard throughout their lives. They lived through periods of feast and famine, reinventing themselves and their fortunes by using and adapting aspects of Indian culture to fit the fads and fancies of the English market…Dean Mohamet was a Bihari: he was born in Patna, Bihar, to a Muslim family related to the Nawabs of Murshidabad". Sardar, ***Balti Britain,*** 44.

[vii] ***Ibid.,*** 8.

[viii] "This is the legacy I brought with me to Britain. Hakim Sahib inculcated in me a distaste for colonialism and what British did in and to India. For me, this is not about some dead and distant past. The history lives with me, and shapes the way I see Britain". ***Ibid.,*** 59-60.

[ix] "Orientalism is a form of inward reflection, preoccupied with the intellectual concerns, problems, fears and desires of the West that are visited on a fabulated, constructed object by conventions called the Orient". Ziauddin Sardar, ***Orientalism*** (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 13.

[x] Zia met Professor Salam in his office at the Imperial College. After his education at Cambridge, Salam, a scion of a traditional Punjabi family and adherent to a sect often decried by other Muslims, returned to Lahore to join Government College, Lahore—his alma mater. Salam served Pakistan in the 1960s for a while but most of his teaching and research happened in the West where he died in 1997 of Alzheimer.

[xi] ***Balti Britain,*** 91.

[xii] Muhammad Anwar, ***Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain*** (London: Heinemann, 1979).

[xiii] Sardar, ***Balti Britain,*** 144.

[xiv] ***Ibid.,*** 161.

[xv] ***Ibid.,*** 223.

[xvi] Following several debates on television and articles in the British newspapers such as ***The Independent*** and ***The Guardian,*** Zia teamed up with Merryl Davies to pen a volume on Rushdie affair at a time when the tempo was quite ascendant. See, Merryl Davis and Ziauddin Sardar, ***Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair*** (London: Grey Seal Books, 1990).

[xvii] Sardar, ***Balti Britain***, 323.

[xviii] An anthropologist with personal interest in Islam, Davies became a Muslim and worked for the BBC until she joined Zia in collaborative writing. Both later found themselves in Malaysia working as close associates of Anwar Ibrahim, the Malaysian politician and one-time Deputy Prime Minister under Mahathir Muhammad. In 2011, Davies gave an interview to an on-line Welsh newspaper, recapping her journey from a mining village to London's cosmopolitan culture and conversion to Islam without changing her name or attire. See, Walesonline, "Muslim Convert Merryl Wyn Davies calls for better understanding on 9/11 anniversary", 9 September 2011: https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/muslim-

convert-merryl-wyn-davies-1809688?fbclid=IwAR14wVD_QOVtmEaZEpPyiOVig-X5X-y7j4xgWUEGinfVnXTtGF9Io4P-riw

[xix] Merryl Wyn Davies passed away in Malaysia on 1 February 2021. For an obituary note, see "Merryl Wyn Davies (25 June 1949-1 February 2021)", **The Muslim Institute:** https://musliminstitute.org/freethinking/muslim-institute/merryl-wyn-davies-23-june-1949-1-february-2021

[xx] A recent investigation finds several common grounds between Islam and Post-modernism, and takes Zia to the task for not fully comprehending this interface, thus disallowing himself a fresher perspective. See Mohammad Shafiq,"Islam in Postmodern Times: Modernism, Postmodernism and Sufi Tradition in Islam", PhD thesis, University of Sunderland, 2019.

[xxi] For one such comparative work, see Richard T. Antoun.,"Two Muslim intellectuals in the postmodern West: Akbar Ahmed and Ziauddin Sardar", in Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan (eds.) ***Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity***, (London: Routledge, 1994).

[xxii] Ziauddin Sardar, ***Postmodernism: New Imperialism of Western Culture*** (London: Pluto, 1997).

[xxiii] Hua Hsu, "Stuart Hall and the Rise of Cultural Studies", ***The New Yorker,*** 17 July 2017.

[xxiv] Ziauddin Sardar, ***Introducing Cultural Studies: A Graphic Guide*** (London: Icon Books, 2015).

[xxv] He simply said: "'My address is 9 Hillsea Street, London E1, United Kingdom'. I left the podium and returned to sit with the audience. Pandemonium broke out. The Chair insisted that I return to the podium and give a 'proper address'. I refused". On public insistence, Zia did utter some words showing pessimism in Pakistan given his experience of the conference and other unneeded bureaucratic extremities. Ziauddin Sardar, ***A Person of Pakistani Origins*** (London: Hurst, 2018), 10-11.

[xxvi] ***Ibid.,*** 14-18.

[xxvii] Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, ***Why do People Hate America?*** (London: Icon Books, 2003); and Ziauddin Sardar, ***Desperately Seeking Paradise: Journeys of a Sceptical Muslim*** (London: Granta, 2005), 220-21.

[xxviii] In fact, Zia had brought a female Muslim student from a meeting that ended quite late making it impossible for her to travel at a late hour. Zia had forgotten to take the keys for their flat necessitating the need to ring the doorbell that caused his Mother—Mumsey—open the door in a rather state of shock. Zia's apparent obsequiousness made the matter worse with Auntie Rashida imputing all kinds of meanings to this 'misdemeanour' and the punishment took the shape of reading Thanwi's volume aloud by our author.

[xxix] Sardar, ***A Person of Pakistani Origins,*** 173-83.

[xxx] This is the term Zia uses for himself in one of his oft-quoted works, ***Desperately Seeking Paradise***, 201.

[xxxi] ***Ibid.,*** 31-2.

[xxxii] ***Ibid.***, 121.

[xxxiii] For a recent biographical work on Siddiqui and his involvement with Muslim student groups in Britain, see C. Scott Jordan, ***A Very British Muslim Activist: The Life of Ghayasuddin Siddiqui*** (Preston: Beacon Books, 2019).

[xxxiv] Sardar, ***Desperately Seeking Paradise,*** 245.

[xxxv] ***Ibid.,*** 279. According to Zia, Rushdie, other than selectively using works on Islamic history such as the Prophet's biography by Martin Lings, intentionally aimed at maligning him and especially his wives which only encouraged racist and such phobic groups to have a field day on Islam and Muslims. Western media, in most cases, facilitated this demonization by otherwise liberal and critical elements to the extent that the volume by Zia and Merryl Davies dilating on these themes was consistently rejected by several publishers until a Native American publisher, John Duncan, took the initiative under Grey Seal.

[xxxvi] Another British Pakistan author saw the contestations between the U.S.-led NeoCons and Muslim militants as a clash of similar typologies but with no less horrendous human cost. Tariq Ali, ***The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads, and Modernity*** (London: Verso, 2003); also, Iftikhar H. Malik, ***Crescent between Cross and Star: Muslims and the West after 9/11*** (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[xxxvii] Zia, in this interpretive work, builds up the case for context(s) while reading and understanding the powerful and enduring text of the Qur'an. Highlighting the vital issues of plurality and inclusivity, Zia articulates the need for a varied and more time-based understanding of the Muslim holy book and goes beyond the usual Arabic literalism. Ziauddin Sardar, ***Reading the Qur'an*** (London: Hurst, 2015).

[xxxviii] Ziauddin Sardar, ***Mecca: The Sacred City*** (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). This work is a personal and historical searchlight on Islam's holiest city that never was the capital of any Muslim polity yet retains an exceptional sanctity due to the Ka'aba.

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