Chapter-4

AAMIR ALI
INTRODUCTION:

The pre-independence Indian English Muslim writers were numerous. Aamir Ali is one such literary celebrity. However, he is not as famous as Ahmed Ali and K. A. Abbas in the field of English fiction. Comparatively his creative output is not substantial. Still as a young novelist of the period, he has earned an important place in Indian literature. He is one such novelist who talks about India, however staying abroad. A remarkable thing about his writing is that he writes about Hindu society more than about Muslim society. Most of his heroes are Hindus.

The present chapter is about Aamir Ali's life and works. Here an effort is made to study his novels Conflict (1947), Via Geneva (1967) and Assignment in Kashmir (1973). As for his biographical details, there are no authentic sources available in Indian libraries. One has to know him only through his writings. Hence, the chapter concentrates more on his novels.
AAMIR ALI'S LIFE AND WORKS:

However there are not enough references available in regard to Aamir Ali’s personal life, an attempt is made to collect some basic information about his life and career. Aamir Ali, as the youngest novelist among the present Indian English Muslim novelists under study, was born in 1923. Though he was Indian by birth, he spent much of his time abroad. He spent the early years of his childhood in Japan as he migrated there with his father. He had some of his primary education at Kobe. Of course, the Alis, after a few years, returned to India permanently. Aamir Ali completed his matriculation at a school in Dehra Doon. He joined Elphinstone College, Bombay for graduation. Here he became a gentleman befriending many local writers and important people.

Aamir Ali’s was a wandering life. He did not stay at any particular place for a long period. He visited various places and worked in many reputed institutions and organizations. Ali worked as an assistant master for some years in a Doon school. Later, he joined, as an officer, the International Labor Office in Geneva in 1942 and he spent much of his life there. His admirers say Geneva remained a memorable place in his life. What more? He went to Pakistan after Partition and served as the new nation’s Ambassador to Geneva.
AAMIR ALI’S NOVELS:

Aamir Ali is a writer of eminence. The subject matter of his writing is war. Aamir Ali wrote novels, short stories and poems. His novels Conflict (1947), Via Geneva (1967) and Assignment in Kashmir (1973) are more the products of his experience as a diplomat. A Story of Buddha is his book of short stories, while A Basic Introduction to Shakespeare is his criticism.

Conflict is Aamir Ali’s masterpiece published in the pre-independence period. The theme of the novel is national struggle coupled with Gandhian ideology. It may be noted that Raja Rao’s Kantapura (1938), K. A. Abbas’s Inquilab (1949) and Aamir Ali’s Conflict are similar in their plot-construction. Ali’s Conflict is a story that portrays vividly the reactions of a young boy, Shankar. Shankar is an educated and sensitive village youth. He goes to Bombay for higher education. The novel records the confusion stemming out of binary opposition between village and city, old and new, east and west and nationalism and slavery. The story highlights the dramatic events of 1942’s India.

Madan Kathe’s son Shankar Kathe, the hero of the novel hails from a village called Karegoan. The Kathes belong to a middle class
family. Madan Kathe is a progressive person, very much concerned about his children's future.

Madan Kathe has two sons, Vishnu and Shankar and a daughter, Rangi. Vishnu is a farmer and he is married. Shankar wants to do higher education. But his illiterate mother cannot put up with his going to Bombay for higher education. Aamir Ali observes,

College did not mean much to her, but going to live in a city seemed almost wicked. She protested bitterly when the suggestion was first mooted out about her son's going to Bombay. It is succinctly observed, "In her heart of heart however, she still distrusted the idea, and could not get rid of the feeling that is bided no good either for Shankar or for his family. It did not seem sensible to her."

The logic behind Shankar's mother's opposition to send her son to Bombay is that she hates city life. This reminds us Frederick Nietzsche's hatredness towards the citizens (city people) and liking the folk (volk). Shankar's mother thinks he is incapable of managing himself in a big city. She is afraid that her son will be spoilt there. He may forget his culture and customs. In fact, this belief was common in those days. For instance, when Mahatma Gandhi decided to leave for London, his mother took three promises from him. In the same belief Shankar's
parents wonder as to how his city education will be of any help to them. The author writes even about the boy’s dilemma later,

After a brilliant career in college, he wondered what he would do. It was rather puzzling. It seemed silly to take all that knowledge back to the village, back to digging and sloughing. But then, should he spend his life in the city?

Never go home again? That was even more absurd. However, one day Shankar goes to Bombay consoling his agitated parents. Shankar finds everything new and strange in the metro. The city’s educational atmosphere is not to his level. Its bad immolations are in popular wave. He finds differences in different lectures. The city students are of the opinion that sincerity to teachers and classes is a meaningless philosophy. Here the novelist exposes the drawbacks of contemporary educational system. Aamir Ali compares and contrasts the concept of education in villages and cities. He writes,

Here to miss a class is one of the minors, but it is an important achievement of the undergraduates. Anyone who insisted on going to every class and answering his roll call himself knew nothing about college life. Either he was a terrible coward or a fool. But whatever he was, he was not normal. The second achievement of the successful undergraduates was the ability to talk about different girls
in the college... Naturally, the college boasted its own Don Juans, who wore well-tailored coats, gaudy ties and called half a dozen girls by their first names. These were students who had inhabited the college for a fairly long period, many of them well over the normal four years.³

Still Shankar does not follow the habit of escapism and licentiousness. Even though his friends laugh at him, he decides to follow his old habits with devotion. He attends all classes. He is keen about English poetry, composition, Indian constitution and world history. He takes down notes. The city education changes him. As a result, he goes to hotels often. He stops taking an umbrella to college as his friends laugh at him. So he completes the first year and returns home for vacation.

Aamir Ali focuses on the nature of Indian families in rural areas. Usually village family life is very traditional, even relationships too. Who has not heard of matron’s grip over young ladies? For instance, there is no understanding between Shankar’s mother and his brother Vishnu’s wife Babuli. It is an amusing problem of Sas-Bahoo. But the same troubles Vishnu. When Shankar visits his village, Vishnu tells him about the crux of it. Vishnu observes,

We have tried everything. But it is no good. Shankar’s mother says that Babuli is hiding her children. Babu and Kasi from her, and will not let them play with their own
grandmother. She complains to me about it. What can I do? I tell Babuli and, Babuli says that it is nothing of the kind. The children refuse to come when she calls - you know what little children are and she says that it is Babuli’s fault, that she teaches them not to obey her, and not to go to her. I keep on telling her that it is not so, but she will not listen.

The novel unravels the domestic aspects of Indian life. For instance, one of the characters says a good wife can make a man but a bad one can mar him. So one should select his wife carefully.

After spending his vacation in Koregoan, Shankar goes to Bombay again. Now he befriends a number of gentlemen like Mehta and Ashwin Desai. As was the passion of day, the novelist introduces the theme of war in the sixth chapter. According to Mehta, the Second World War is not a war between the good and the evil but, ...a war between rivals whose interests have clashed.

No one is hoodwinked by the entire fancy parlour – talk of ideologies and principles. One side professes high-minded principles of liberty and democracy, the Nietzschean dogma of the super race, and of the ancient catch-phrase, ‘Might is right.’ The only difference between the two is that the latter are more frank and honest about their principles,
while the former believe in camouflage. What we see in war-torn Europe today is not good fighting against evil, nor God against Satan, but merely the unworthy and petty squabble of two lions over a kill as of two dogs snarling over a bone. There is no idealism in the picture of two dogs growling and spitting over a bone. There is nothing uplifting in the sight.5

Like many of his countrymen, Mehta is of the opinion that Indians neither support the West nor support the Japanese. Mehta speaks like a typical Indian, who believes the Vedic message ‘Live and let others live.’ People think war is a curse on humanity. According to Mehta, the supporters of war either this side or that are inhuman. This draws Shankar’s attention.

The novel depicts the youngsters of the 1940s as the British enemies. Shankar and his friends witness that the British enslaved Indians gradually. They sucked their lifeblood weakening their strength. During the freedom movement, students rejected examinations as they hated the oppressive measures of the Raj.

The novelist discusses the theme of east-west encounter. He ridicules the British style of dressing and documents Indians’ imitation of the West. For instance, when Shankar visited his village in holidays, his sister Rangi laughs at his dress-code. She says,
He wears a suit now. He will soon become the collector *Sahib* of this place and then we’ll all have to obey and fear him. Will your skin begin to grow white also, Shankar?"

This joke annoys Shankar. He feels self-conscious. "You understood nothing," he told his sister, "these are far more convenient and that’s all. Everybody wears this in Bombay. I couldn’t go to college in Dhothi. ‘Convenient’, mocked Rangi ‘oh, very convenient! In them you can’t even sit down properly; you always have to be careful that they’re not crumbled. You can never walk about or sit down naturally, and you say they’re convenient."6

Rangi’s criticism has certain implications.

The novel appeals to many categories of readers. It is rather a social satire. A little later, Shankar falls in love with a city girl called Roshan. Not to speak of his marriage is already fixed with Shanthi, a village girl. He feels happy about Roshan as she is a city girl without any false modesty. Shankar thinks he cannot marry Shanthi. He observes, "How can I possibly go back to the village and marry a girl... I have absolutely nothing in common with her who cannot read and write?"7 But he also realizes the gulf between Roshan and himself. Roshan is enormously richer than him. There is a great contrast between...
his home in Koregoan and Roshan's in Bombay. His parents live in a village, while Roshan's live in a city. Besides, the writer observes,

How he wished he could afford to go to club and dance, to drink cocktails and join in the glittering social life to which distance lent so many enhancements. Sometimes Shankar wondered how Roshan could bear his provincialism and his far inferior, as he saw it, standard of life.8

The last chapter of the novel focuses on nationalism. It covers All India Congress Committee Session held in Bombay on 7th and 8th August 1942. Most of the Congress leaders, especially Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Vallabhbhai Patel were present. It was a patriots' festival. Shankar's friends, some of them student leaders of Bombay University, visited them. His friends like Patel, Modi, Kapadia, Ramchandani, Dange Roshan and Rasheed take an active part in it. Shankar's friend Mehta had completely given up his classes as the country was in its national crisis. Students feel that all the educational activities would be terminated. The whole country realizes the inhumanity of the British Rule and Indians think that Japanese would not help them. No doubt,
the young minds conclude that they should find out a way for liberty. Rashid says, 

That is the encouraging sign today, that so many people are beginning to realize that all the misfortunes of this country are due to the White Sahibs, and we must do something to remove them.9

Mahatma Gandhi, Javaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad are arrested at Gouli Tank, Bombay on 18th August 1942. Soon a Hartal (strike) is declared and lathi-charge follows. Many people and student leaders are beaten. Kasturba Gandhi delivers a public speech at Shivaji Park in Dadar, Bombay. Later on Mahatma Gandhi, from jail, sends his last message, ‘do or die.’

This momentous period of Indian history is important in Shankar’s life too as he starts realizing certain things which, so far, he did not imagine. He feels guilty of neglecting his village. After taking an active part in the movement of 1942, he feels that real India lies in its villages. He says,

My mother is an Indian. But I was too clever to be an Indian. So I left home and at great expense and inconvenience to my parents came over here to learn how not to be an Indian. Yes, I looked down on them. I did; there is no point in denying it. I thought I was a superior
being, up in the clouds, head swollen full of gas. I thought they were uneducated and uncultured just because they could not read English and quote Shakespeare. What a fool I've been! And Shanthi, I looked down on her. She is a simple woman. But she is an Indian, a true Indian, and I am a hybrid, a snob, I thought that she was - I compared her with Roshan - Roshan is like me, only to a greater degree. At least I have had the advantage of living in the village, and of having Indian relatives. But she has never come into contact with real India at all - the India of culture and civilization.¹⁰

Shankar leaves for his village in order to create national awareness. He determines to start a freedom movement in Koregaon by leading an ordinary life as that of the Mahatma and spreading the Mahatma’s thoughts. To begin with he faces a number of problems in communicating his ideology and thoughts to his villagers, as they are illiterate. Still he forms a strong organization and imparts national thoughts to his people. But the police do not allow him. A police troop goes to Karegoan in order to arrest Shankar. But the whole village is electrified with the spirit of freedom. So the fighting takes place between the villagers and police. Consequently many villagers are beaten: some of them are killed and some of them are taken to jail. But
Shankar escapes from the tragedy somehow. All the women, whose husbands are arrested, begin protesting against the police. The police do not care them. Even they arrest some of them.

Alas! One fine morning when Shankar is about to take his bath in a river, he notices a heart-rendering sight – the sight of the body of a girl, whom he had loved, floating on the river. It is the body of his sweetheart Shanti. Shanthi has become a victim of police rape and atrocity in his village. So the novel ends with a tragic note.

As G. P. Sarma, in his critical work *Nationalism and Indo-Anglian Fiction* has rightly observed, “One aspect of this novel which has added a new dimension to the theme of Indian nationalism in Indo-Anglian fiction is that of Muslim participation in the Indian freedom struggle.”

Rashid and Roshan are the most potential characters who react to Mahatma Gandhi’s final word of *Karenge Ya Marenge*. They participate in the struggle and they are beaten and arrested. Here Aamir Ali’s specialty lies in his diffusion of Hindu-Muslim atmosphere. His novel *Conflict* represents the concept of *Samagra Bharatha* (whole India).

In a way *Conflict* is not only the story of national movement but also a journey into the psyche of pre-independence India.

Love and war are the popular themes in the literature produced during the first and second world wars. But only a few writers like Ernest Hemingway and Stephan Crane at international level and Mulk
Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Molgaonkar and K. A. Abbas at national level are popular and noteworthy. Yet being a colonial country India is far away from the battlefield. Indians did not get a direct experience of the war. But Aamir Ali had the benefit of witnessing wars. At the same time it was the period when Indian writing in English was just opening its eyes to the national and international panorama. The novel form was not yet strong too to absorb all that was going on in the West.

The novelist has two main purposes here. He depicts an Indian war against the British for independence at the national level; and secondly he presents the anti-fascists' war against fascists at the international level. So the novel is full of conflicts - that is conflicts within and conflicts outside. Conflict covers many things - Gandhian struggle, modernism, east-west encounter, communal interface, rural-urban polarities and social realism.

The novel is about youngsters. Mehta and Rashid, the two romantic characters share the ideology of humanism and communal harmony. Aamir Ali presents Shankar for a while as inclined to surrender his educational career for the liberty of his country.

Aamir Ali's second novel, Via Geneva (1967) is partly a travelogue and partly a novel. Even it reads like an autobiography. Via Geneva is about two hundred and seventy pages, where several fragments of
national and international issues of contemporary life are discussed in an unorganized manner. It has some bearing upon the contemporary Indo-Anglian writers. In case, it is taken into consideration as a political novel, it stands a comparison with Ahmed Ali's *Rats and Diplomats* (1986). As an autobiographical novel, it resembles Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961). Not to speak of as a travelogue, it reads like Abbas's *The World is My Village* (1983). *Via Geneva* depicts the story of partition and there is a continuous development of humanistic philosophy from the individual to the universal level. If Shankar, the hero of *Conflict* observes socio-political upheavals as an Indian, Latif Khan and Roy of *Via Geneva* observe the problems of partition along with international issues, growing under the burden of communism, imperialism, capitalism and fundamentalism. Latif Khan and Roy are the citizens of the modern world. If Shankar speaks about educational system in India, Latif Khan and Roy mock the philosophy of co-existence at international level.

*Via Geneva* begins with the description of the family of Marcel Desbiens of International Child Welfare Organization (ICWO). Marcel Desbiens is the chief of a conference held in the Department of International Child Welfare Organization. He has a daughter called Maryse. She is a twenty-one year old young girl with youthful whims and dreams. She is happy to have been born in this world. She falls in
love with Besil Grantley. Marcel Desbiens plays a vital role on an international platform and through him the novelist projects an international affair. The delegates think of children’s interests. The international delegates include a big list of representatives of different countries. Some of them are John P. Haneval, David Burougham, Tony Spirelli (an Argentinean), Faruk Alam (a Turkish Minister), Stukas, Kenneth Oniti, a secretary of the Naizerean Ministry, Benito Jimines (of Philippines), Ajith Roy (from India) and Latif Khan (from Pakistan). Though the list of delegates is big enough to create confusion, Latif Khan and Ajit Roy are more important here.

The delegates from Brazil, Russia, Philippines, Rome, America, India, Pakistan and other countries gather to discuss children’s welfare internationally. But their discussions are a farce as most of them are dishonest. They chat rather on their trivial problems of day today life and indulge in backbiting. Somebody says communists spoil the health of children and democratic system is irresponsible for them. A senior senator Henry Smith of Briton quarrels for his breakfast. Stuckas, a well-known figure of ICWO who, as a delegate from Hungary, attended many such meetings is of the opinion that ICWO is degenerated. It is full of politics. He says such organizations should be out of politics. A Naizarean minister, Kenneth A. Oniti, who is a secretary for child welfare, is to represent the children’s problems of his country. Alas! He
attends the meeting just to meet his Indian friend, Ajit Roy. The way he works is sarcastic. He remarks,

The only reason I came was I wanted to see you, he said.

They talked of the days when they had been at Oxford and Cambridge, respectively. They made disparaging remarks about each other's university and laughed loudly slapping their knees. It made them feel young and took them back to the days when the world was so much more simple and secure. Roy had ordered two whiskies. They settled in a comfortable corner where they could talk undisturbed.  

The Russian delegate criticizes Americans for their racial discrimination. He boasts of his country, "Russia is the only white country in the world, where there is no racial discrimination."  

As the novel progresses, Aamir Ali shifts over to the theme of Indian partition. Ajit Roy, for a launch, invites some of the Asian delegates like Latif Khan, Sumi Tomo (of Japan), Kumarsinghe (of Ceylon) and Benito (of Philippines). Ajit Roy represents India as much as Latif Khan represents Pakistan. They are close friends from the time before the Partition. The evil impact of partition on Indo-Pakistan relationship is well portrayed through them. Look at the details. Latif Khan and Ajit Roy worked together in a department and Roy was Latif Khan's boss before the Partition. Both hailed from the state of Bengal.
The language, literature and culture are common to them. Even after the event of partition they continue their cordial relations. Still Latif Khan nourishes love and affection for his Indian brothers. The novelist says,

He liked Roy personally and they were friends. They had been colleagues in the same department before Partition, though Roy was a year or two senior to him. Above all, they were both from Bengal. They were united by the love of their common language and literature.\(^{14}\)

However, in the changed situation, Latif Khan and Ajit Roy are careful about their views on Indo-Pak relations. They think their relations are important. This surprises others. A senator from England never expects them live together. Even Hanley Smith of America never thought of such an intimacy between the two. The novelist observes:

Senator White was equally intrigued by seeing Roy and Latif Khan together. He said to Hanley Smith, leaning across the table conspiratorially. How can the Indian and the Pakistani stay together? I would have thought they wouldn't be on speaking terms with each other. It is the influence of the Commonwealth, said Hanley Smith gravely. It makes us all brothers under the sky.\(^{15}\)
Mary Brougham is another delegate. She is immature. She is more worried about her dress code and attitude than about her concerns. She is fond of Shanti, the wife of Pravin, the secretary of Indian delegate. Brougham does not like Shanti's saree. She thinks the saree will not suit her. It cannot be comfortable in some seasons. But Shanti argues contrarily. Mary Brougham is one among those who criticize India and Pakistan. She declares herself as a guide and philosopher. It is observed:

She was wearing a shapeless dress of the sort that had been much worn about five years ago. As the wife of the Head of the Public Relations Department, she felt it her duty to talk to the delegates, especially those from the underdeveloped countries, and put them at their case. They after all needed guidance and direction, she found.16

Even she cannot sit silently. She talks continuously with Latif Khan and Ajit Roy about the problems of Indo-Pak relations. She asks Latif Khan from which part of India he came. Latif Khan gets confused because he is representing Pakistan. So he tells her he came from Pakistan. Mary Brougham regrets about the division of country. But Ajit Roy convinces her the reality speaking about India's unity and diversity. Mary Brougham asks Ajit Roy the same question. Ajit Roy tells her that he is from India. The lady says they should have lived together. She admires their togetherness. Ajit Roy explains that "when the country was
partitioned, they forgot to partition the language therefore we are doomed to understand one another perfectly.”¹⁷

Mary Brougham, however, does not like Indian vernaculars. For instance, he says,

What language is that? Demanded Mary Brougham, intervening sharply. You have dozens of languages, I know. I thought you had to speak English to understand each other. What language was it that you were speaking?

‘Bengali’ said Roy. It’s one of the minor dialects of our subcontinent. Tagore wrote in it, but you wouldn’t have heard of him, I suppose. Mary Brougham ignored Roy’s comment.¹⁸

Mary Brougham goes on discussing similar things endlessly.

Aamir Ali’s theme of independence which remains incomplete in Conflict, continues in Via Geneva. Here the novelist portrays the love story of Maryse and Besil Grantley. Besil Grantley is from France. The Desbians have no respect for the French. Mrs. Desbiens opposes her husband for giving too much liberty to his daughter. She says, “If I were a man, I would go and take my daughter away. I don’t approve of her mixing with such people. They are not the sort of persons she is accustomed to be with.”¹⁹ But finally Maryse gets married with Besil Grantley and they say,
We cannot live her life for her, he said, she must live her own. They argued along familiar lines for a while. Then Sophie announced her decision. Well all right. She said we’d go ahead and have the dinner. But if it worsens the situation with Maryse it will be your fault. I’ll know whom to blame. That you’ll do anyway, whatever happens said Desbiens but only to himself.20

The novel, however bulky in its size, is varied in its interest. It represents the tastes and attitudes of different delegates from the world. Each chapter is lively and impressive. The novelist has used different techniques in portraying different incidents and characters. There are as many as hundred characters drawn from the contemporary politics of national and international importance.

Aamir Ali’s Assignment in Kashmir (1973) is a novel on Kashmir, the valley of death. The issue of Kashmir in Indian history is one of the conspicuous matters. Like the event of partition, the Kashmir problem has provided interesting themes not only for Indian English writers, but even for the world writers and they have written a number of works on it.

Assignment in Kashmir is, of course, a post-independence novel. It deals with an Indian issue, which has its birth in the pre-independence history. The minorities’ problems were not solved even after the
partition of India into Hindustan and Pakistan, because all Muslims did not go to Pakistan. Most of the separatists feel that the concept of Pakistan is incomplete unless India sheds Kashmir to it. They argue that the letter ‘K’ in Pakistan stands for Kashmir.

The Kashmir issue, after the division of the country, became very delicate as a number of provinces or princely states of the pre-independence India were forcibly brought under Indian government. Kashmir became a victim of the policy of integration of princely states. Its king Ranjith Singh was in a dilemma because, Kashmir problem was not only related to land property but it was the question of loyalty to India. Ranjith Singh was under the control of Indian government but Kashmir Muslims wanted it become a part of Pakistan. In fact, there are wars over the deadlock.

Many of the writers of the pre- and post-independence India have been discussing the Kashmir issue in vain. Writers like K. A. Abbas and Aamir Ali have thrown some light on the matter. Abbas’s *Kashmir Fights for Freedom* (1948) is an important document on it. It is observed, “Abbas insisted on the need for riddance of poverty and terrorism, communal atrocities between Hindus and Muslims and the kingship which has turned this heaven on earth (Kashmir) into a valley of death.” On the contrary, Aamir Ali’s *Assignment in Kashmir* is the story
of terrorism in Kashmir. The novel is sub-titled *High Tension Drama of Adventure and Heroism*.

The hero of the novel, Cap. Ranjith Singh emerges as a force against the widespread menace of terrorism. The novel looks like a document on military assignment in Kashmir. Aamir Ali bothers as to how Kashmir can solve its issue of redemption. However, the Kashmiris’ miserable life, their ideological conflicts, their poverty and socio-political developments are discussed here.

Cap. Ranjith Sing is the hero of the novel. Other characters like Atma Ram, Azad, Gafur and Karen are villains. Aamir Ali presents certain conflicts between Cap. Ranjith Singh and other characters. The two major women characters Laila and Hansen are not well defined though Laila emerges as a pious figure.

*Assignment in Kashmir* is a novel of heroism and adventure. Yet the themes of love, romance and socio-cultural aspects are not depicted fully and properly. What we read about is the spread of terrorism in Kashmir. Cap. Ranjith Sing, a young military officer is sent there to solve terrorist problems. As is well known to the world, Kashmir is one of the targets of terrorists from Pakistan, Afghanistan and many other Muslim countries. Gradually much support is given to the terrorists to spread inhuman activities all over the country.
The young and energetic Cap. Ranjith Singh goes to Kashmir to study the situation. He wants to find out terrorist places and the nature of arms and operators behind them. The world knows Pakistanis trained these terrorists. China, America and Sweden supported Pakistan. The terrorist outfits are given financial and military aids and their actions are rewarded with money. They are projected as the leaders of Kashmir freedom movement. Their aim is to separate Kashmir from India. The internationally notorious groups like Mujahiddin, Hijubul Mujahiddin and Taliban are behind them. According to terrorists, Kashmir is not a part of India, because, Indian government has taken Kashmir without Kashmiris's consent. They think Ranjith Singh does not represent all Kashmiris.

The anti-Indian terrorist organizations declare an unofficial war against India. Their war is so systematic that they are nearly as strong as Indian military. Azad, the villain of the novel explains how his people have prepared against India,

We have been preparing ourselves for years and now we are ready. We have a core of three hundred highly trained and disciplined men -- men who’ve received the best training available anywhere in the world. We have contacts in thirty-five different villages and at fifteen separate points in Srinagar."
Azad, standing beside Kashmir map on a wall tells about his contacts. He says "We have guns, automatic rifles, revolvers, mortars, light and medium range machine guns, satchel chargers, sub-machine guns, knives, daggers, swords, grenades, cocktails enough to equip a thousand more men."

He goes on elaborating, "We have established a system of communication and we have trained radio operators. We have a system of runners and information points. Supplies of food, medicines, clothes, equipment we have them all, in different stocks. We lack nothing, and we know we can get more when we need them. We have jeeps and land rovers and men trained to drive them and above all, we have this impregnable base, secret and impossible to find, from which we can operate safe from discovery.

We have a large reserve of money given to us by China, by Pakistan and by our supporters, and we can raise more from our people who want to help and from people who are afraid not to help and support will grow by leaps and bounds."

The terrorists have geographical convenience—many villages and mountains are safe places for their hiding and activating plans. They
have learnt lessons how to live like fish in water and like animals in
forest. They can establish any relation, anywhere, at any time sitting in
valleys. Some of the areas like Drass, Kargas and Kargil are convenient
places. The novel describes them vividly. The terrorists respect
Kashmiri freedom fighters. When dead they bury them with respect.
They respect the helping Chinese and Pakistanis while they hate
Indians. For instance, "It would be too difficult to return the bodies of
the Chinese and Pakistanis, but the body of Indian could be left on
night in front of police headquarters in Srinagar." 23

Cap. Ranjit Singh goes to Kargas and detects a number of terrorist
activities. A certain Atma Ram who is a big businessman transports
Pakistani, Swedish and Chinese arms to Indian terrorists. Eric, one of
the Swedish arm suppliers is in contact with Atma Ram. Gofur and
Akbar work as mediators between Azad and Atma Arm. Personal
affairs also surface there. Akbar is in love with Azad’s sister Laila.
Whereas things like love, marriage and human sentiment have no place
in Azad’s dictionary. He only thinks of Kashmir’s liberty. At one stage
somehow Cap. Ranjit Singh and Akbar are caught hold by Azad and are
kept in a prison. For these persons there is no other ray of hope of
liberty than Laila. Finally Laila goes to rescue her brother Azad. Yet it
does not appear easy for her. When Laila goes to free these fellows,
Rasool, one of the terrorists, is on security guard. Laila offers to pay
him five hundred rupees plus her jewels for setting them free. But Rasool says, "I do not want it. We can't do this, little lady, even if you give us lack of rupees." Rasool does not budge. He thinks his job is more important. If Azad knew that Rasool neglected his duty he would burn him alive. So the terrorists' self-made constitution sounds very inhuman.

As the novel comes to a finale, both Akbar and Ranjit Singh escape with the help of Laila. Soon Azad comes to know that Laila as well as Rasool had a hand in their escape. Now as he becomes helpless due to Pakistani agents' non-cooperation, he surrenders to the Government of India. Moreover his sister Laila opposed his deeds. Finally Ranjit Singh arrests Azad and his companions. So the novel ends with a poetic note that virtue triumphs over vice.

*Assignment in Kashmir* is a kind of detective writing. The novelist makes use of the theme of love and romance between Karen and Ranjit Singh with a view to make it interesting. Karen is the wife of a Swedish, Eric. She is innocent. Even she does not know the nature of his business. Only Ranjit Singh exposes Eric's ugly activities. Since then Karen hates her husband and she likes Ranjit Singh. Finally Eric becomes the victim of his own evil. He realizes that he is following a wrong path and he tries to come out of it. But Azad's followers kill him. Consequently, Karen leaves for her country.
There is no room for women characters or for female sentiments in the novel. Whatever female characters are there they are for a thematic relief. Of course, Laila plays an important role in releasing Akbar and Ranjit Singh. Yet she is a flat character.

*Assignment in Kashmir* could be better received as a time-pass book than a novel, because the norms of the novel are not followed here. For the author, the narration of the story is important. Plot-construction, characterization and other things are secondary. Even the book is not about adventure proper.

**CONCLUSION:**

Aamir Ali’s novels cannot be studied from the Muslim point of view as they are about national and international issues. In fact, he lived as an Indian and wrote as such, whereas other Muslim novelists have written about Muslim cultural heritage. Aamir Ali represents a wide spectrum of Indian panorama. He talks of India as a whole and depicts the burning issues of the time. What surprises us is that he does not write about gender inequality in Muslim society or about social evils like purdah and polygamy. It seems he did not encounter much of Muslim orthodoxy.
REFERENCES:


2) Ibid., p.7.

3) Ibid., p.12.


5) Ibid., p.32.

6) Ibid., p.43.

7) Ibid., p.57.

8) Ibid., p.58.

9) Ibid., p.104.

10) Ibid., p.126.


13) Ibid., p.56.

14) Ibid., p.33.

15) Ibid., p.40.

16) Ibid., p.45.

17) Ibid., p.46.
18) Ibid., p.46.

19) Ibid., p.57.

20) Ibid., p.120.


23) Ibid., p.143.