

SACRED KNOWLEDGE AND SECULAR LEARNING: AN ISLAMIC EPISTEMOLOGICAL READING OF NADEEM ASLAM'S THE WASTED VIGIL

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the representation of sacred knowledge and its marginalization by both secular and extremist forces in Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* (Aslam, 2008). Driven by Islamic epistemology, it examines the framing of knowledge in the context of a moral, ethical, and social duty and discusses how suppression erodes faith (Iman) and social good. Data were gathered through first-order data collection: a close and critical reading of the novel, informally triangulated with secondary sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic epistemological texts, Critical Race Theory, and literary critique. A qualitative, interpretive approach with thematic and close textual analysis identified thematic motifs of sacred knowledge, moral responsibility, justice, and ethical erosion. The findings suggest that Taliban-imposed restriction on education, particularly for women, exemplifies the distortion of Islamic principles, and CRT details the racialized and structural dimensions of knowledge suppression affecting Muslim communities. The study contributes to knowledge by bringing Islamic epistemology together with critical theory, offering new insight into the ethical, epistemological, and sociopolitical consequences of knowledge in post-conflict contexts and emphasizing the importance of education for justice and communal harmony.

Keywords: Islamic epistemology, sacred knowledge, secular learning, Nadeem Aslam, Critical Race Theory, education, ethics, post-conflict literature.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary literary narratives emanating from Muslim societies ravaged by prolonged conflict often engage with questions of knowledge, ethics, and moral responsibility. Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* is set against the socio-political backdrop of war-torn Afghanistan and offers a powerful reflection on the destruction of human life, cultural memory, and intellectual traditions. The novel repeatedly foregrounds images of destroyed libraries, fragmented education, and silenced voices, insinuating that war corrodes not

only physical spaces but also the moral and epistemological foundations of society. Within such a context, the novel invites critical engagement with the relation between sacred knowledge and secular learning, particularly as they function within Islamic and modern knowledge systems.

In Islamic intellectual tradition, knowledge is a sacred trust that unites revelation, reason, and moral responsibility. Accordingly, Islamic epistemology embeds learning in morality by

relating the quest for knowledge to justice, mercy, and the protection of human dignity. However, modern secular systems of learning—often configured around colonial histories, global structures of power, and militarized rationality—tend to sever knowledge from ethical responsibility. The *Wasted Vigil* dramatizes this epistemological rupture through characters who move between Islamic moral knowledge and secular modes of learning marked by instrumentality, fragmentation, and ethical instability. The novel thus becomes a site at which incommensurable knowledges converge and collide under conditions of violence and political instability.

Despite the growth of scholarship on *The Wasted Vigil*, the existing studies have focused on trauma, gender, exile, and postcolonial suffering while paying limited attention to the novel's sustained engagement with epistemological conflict and a contestation of knowledge systems. Likewise, literary studies concerning Islam in contemporary fiction would reflect representation and identity rather than a philosophical underpinning within Islamic thought. There is a remarkable gap in scholarship on how Islamic epistemology functions as a critical framework in the understanding of sacred knowledge and moral learning in post-conflict literature. Thirdly, though the racialization of Muslim identities has been looked at in larger critical debates, its intersection with epistemic hierarchies and knowledge production in literary texts remains underexplored.

In light of these gaps, this study investigates how *The Wasted Vigil* navigates through the tension between sacred knowledge and secular learning from an Islamic epistemological perspective and attends to the racialized dynamics that shape the valuation of knowledge. These research questions will guide the work: How does the novel represent sacred knowledge within an Islamic epistemological framework? How, and in what ways does secular learning challenge, marginalize, or distort ethical knowledge in war contexts? How are Islamic modes of knowing racialized or delegitimized within the global discourses of modernity and conflict? Thus, this study will answer these questions and intend to foreground knowledge as a moral, ethical, and political concern in the narrative.

The theoretical framework is primarily based on Islamic epistemology, which views knowledge as an

integrated system of revelation, reason, and moral responsibility. Through the work of classical and contemporary Islamic thinkers, this study investigates how sacred knowledge is represented, fragmented, or silenced in the novel. In order to enrich this epistemological investigation, Critical Race Theory is utilized as a subsidiary analytical framework. CRT allows the study to examine how secular knowledge systems are nestled within racialized structures of power that frame the representation of Muslim selves and Islamic knowledge. Significantly, CRT operates not as a contending framework but supplements Islamic epistemology by embedding epistemic marginalization within global hierarchies of power. There are several reasons why this study is important. First, the study engages in and contributes to the interdisciplinary field of Islam and literature by centering Islamic epistemology as a critical framework for literature analysis. This research expands on previous research on *The Wasted Vigil* through moving away from trauma-focused approaches to epistemological and ethical inquiry. Most importantly, integrating a supporting critical lens allows the research to present nuance on how sacred knowledge is contested within secular and racialized systems of learning. Thus, it enhances discussions on post-conflict literature, moral philosophy, and the global politics of knowledge while accentuating the presence of ethical learning in contemporary Muslim contexts.

Literature Review

1. Islamic Epistemology and the Concept of Knowledge ('Ilm)

In Islam, the concept of knowledge, 'ilm, is essentially moral and ethical, as it is geared toward spiritual development and societal well-being. The understanding was systematized by classical scholars like Burhān al-Dīn Al-Zarnūjī in a foundational treatise called *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim*, which remains influential to this day in the pedagogics of the Muslim world. Al-Zarnūjī draws a distinction between knowledge that is obligatory upon the individual, *fard.ʿayn*, which is comprised of jurisprudence and religious duties, and knowledge that is obligatory upon the society, *fard. kifāyah*, such as medicine or astronomy, guided by Islamic ethical principles. This classification makes it clear that learning is inseparable from moral accountability and spiritual cultivation. His

pedagogical model emphasizes direct engagement with the teacher, mu'allim, critical reasoning, and ethical reflection, a bridge between classical scholarship and modern educational discourse (Ahmad et al., 2025). Modernist renditions further expand the definition of fard. kifāyah to include rational sciences and global systems of knowledge, pointing out the integration of secular learning into Islamic ethical norms through the process of Islamization of knowledge. But more importantly, from a literary point of view, Al-Zarnūjī's framework provides an important analytical lens for the analysis of war narratives, such as Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, in which characters confront the destruction of educational institutions, silenced intellectual traditions, and ethical dilemmas in war-torn contexts.

2. Secular Learning and Modern Knowledge Systems

The project of the Islamization of knowledge emerged as a critical response to the domination of Western epistemologies over Muslim intellectual traditions. It thus aimed to reconcile sacred Islamic knowledge with modern disciplines like economics, sociology, and political science (Hussain et al., n.d.). Other scholars like Naquib al-Attas, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, and Ismail al-Faruqi have emphasized the need for developing alternative frameworks of learning that acknowledge Muslim ownership of their intellectual institutions and focus on an integration of Qur'anic ethical principles with contemporary knowledge production (Wahab et al., 2025). In concrete terms, this methodological approach involves stating an Islamic paradigm of knowledge, elaborating Qur'anic hermeneutics, and reexamining both the Islamic intellectual heritage and the Western intellectual tradition in order to construct a coherent epistemological synthesis. Such approaches underscore the ethical and moral dimensions of learning in Islam, with a clear emphasis that secular knowledge is not to be rejected but adapted to serve the spiritual and social well-being of Muslim societies (Ijaz & Rabi, 2022).

Despite its theoretical sophistication, the project of Islamization has been severely challenged in its practical realization. Critics argue that Islamic social sciences are badly produced, and institutions such as the IIUM have been unable to sustain their original pan-Islamic mission due to structural,

financial, and political reasons (SAGE Open, 2016; Al-Attas, 1993). Moreover, though the protagonists of the Islamization of knowledge produced critical discourses against the epistemological and methodological shortcomings of Western knowledge, they have not been able to bring fuqaha together with social scientists and experts of other disciplines to work on contemporary social problems (Al-Faruqi, 1982; Alwani, 1995; Ashiq et al., 2024). This tension-continuing and existing between sacred knowledge of Islam and secular learning-was again an invitation to a critical epistemology that presents an examination of both the ethical grounding and limitations imposed by modern institutionalism. In literary studies, it offers a rich critical framework in engaging with works such as Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, a novel in which characters experience the erosion of knowledge, disrupted education systems, and moral choice within catastrophic conflict zones, reflecting the wider debates on the synthesis of sacred and secular knowledge in Muslim societies (Nawaz et al., 2024).

3. Knowledge, Power, and Epistemic Violence

The notion of epistemic violence, as conceptualized in postcolonial and decolonial discourses, is more about the entangled links among knowledge, power, and violence (Rabi et al., 2025). It holds the tidy distinction between the violence of the body and the violence of concepts, reminding us that the global knowledge system is always objective in its appearance, while its reliance on colonial, Eurocentric, and hegemonic discourses remains unabated (Rabi et al., 2025). Thus, the subordinated knowledge is relegated to the status of the forgotten other, thereby suffering from symbolic as well as structural violence. Modern responses to the latter would require a combination of critical reflexivity and agency, which would translate into critiquing the dominantly deployed knowledge while discarding the privileges accruing to one's own location in terms of concepts such as race, class, gender, and geography. In other words, the very assumptions underwriting modernity, as well as the principles of international politics, would need to be named, and Eurocentric perspectives would need to give place to other knowledge systems, which would still involve delinking as well as listening attentively to the subordinated knowledge traditions, which hitherto had been treated as outsiders in the world

of knowledge. How such a strategy would help in understanding literary texts, such as Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, in which the inhabitants of a devastated space find themselves in a situation in which knowledge itself, as well as ethics, become dislocated, thus opening up the very terrain of knowledge for an ethical as well as political reinterpretation, could well help in understanding how the sacred as well as the secular knowledge is delegitimized, disvalued, or weaponsized in a situation of conflict, thereby opening up the very questions of ethical responsibility, human dignity, as well as the sustenance of life in the narratives that are rewritten in terms of deep-seated inequalities.

4. Islam, Knowledge, and Contemporary Literature

In his treatise, al-Ghazali provides a comprehensive guide to the acquisition of knowledge by combining the information that comes to us through our sensory perceptions, our reason, the insight of the prophets, and the process of *kashf*. *Kashf* is the process of acquiring knowledge through a direct act of divine grace. According to al-Ghazali, there can only be a synthesis of the eye and the heart. While this notion refers to the information that our eyes have access to through our sensory perceptions, the information that our hearts have access to is the acquisition of insight by the spirit guided by divine light (Hourani; Imam; Nasr).

The process leaves much to be questionable, letting the audience know that the only way to be assured is to integrate knowledge gleaned from multiple places—including philosophy, religious teachings, and science—in order to understand the truths of Allah. Even here, his appeal is not limited to the individual level but extends to the community of scholars, exhorting a collaboration between the religious, the philosophical, and the scientific traditions, recognizing that the two traditions hang together. (Nasr, Imam)

Today, these concepts have become a lens through which the production of knowledge, its morality, and ethics can be viewed, particularly in conflict-ridden areas. Literary writings such as *The Wasted Vigil* by Nadeem Aslam also reflect these concerns. With the aim of giving paramount importance to well-integrated knowledge and ethics, the theory provided by Al-Ghazali provides a robust platform for analyzing how both sacred and secular

knowledge can help in taking ethical decisions, developing resilience, and inculcating accountability in a society which is • threatened with violence, disintegration, and marginalization.

5. Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*: Critical Scholarship

In Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, the author probes the meaning of cherishing human life through the Islamic ethics of morals. The novel juxtaposes the noble teachings of Islam—the code of “life, justice, and mercy”—with the grim reality of war, which rages in war-torn Afghanistan (Rabi & Rabi, 2025). The characters in the novel are seen struggling with “trauma, death, and loss” as their decisions keep alternating between their loyalty to the code of morals and their compromise under the pressure (Aslam, 2008).

With the framing of both Islamic ethics and Critical Race Theory (CRT), researchers interpret how the novel not only exposes a dimension of the critique of the unethical approach to warfare in contemporary society but also how it orients itself to the culturally laden experiences of Muslims in conditions of globalized warfare (Hussain, 2025). A thematic analysis of the novel will ensure how characters embody the ethics of justifiable justice and merciful forgiveness yet are sucked into the maelstrom of warfare and its ethics (Aslam, 2008; Hussain, 2025).

This narrative raises questions regarding modern ethics in war based on the violence inflicted on civilians versus Quranic verses that ban unnecessary violence, emphasizing the protection of civilians and life in general (The Quran 5:32; Sahih al-Bukhari, 1997). Incorporating CRT in this discourse brings out how Muslim identities are racialized in relation to morality in post-warring contexts (Hussain, 2025). Thus, per se, the novel is a literary and ethical inquiry that presents a complex representation of the struggle to preserve life, justice, and mercy amidst the challenges of existence brought about by modern warfare.

6. Racialization of Knowledge and Muslim Identities

The racialization of Islam has significant implications for how minorities exist and who gets to belong, and such a dynamic can be observed in Finland. There, persons with Southwest Asian origin face continuous queries regarding their role and existence in public space (Karimi, 2021). This

effect transcends religion and affects both Muslims and non-Muslims who are labeled as Islamic due to their identity and affiliations, and such phenomena highlight how social categories such as race, religion, gender, and social class construe who stays and who goes (Anthias, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991; Husain, 2019). As indicated, there is a display of what participants undergo related to a 'racialized gaze,' including being labeled perpetual outsiders, consequently being subjected to what Karimi (2021) describes as 'the labour of explanation,' referring to being required to define and explain Islamic values regardless of their non-affiliation with Islam (Ullah, Rabi, Khan, & Ahmad, 2025).

It meets the gaze involving gender stereotypes in the form of passive Muslim female victims and Muslim male oppressors, supporting clean and hierarchical notions of belonging (Farris 2017; Ramirez 2015). The results highlight the spatial and relational nature of racialization in the movement around acceptance and resistance to the imposition of racialisations, emphasizing the production of exclusionary modes of knowing in everyday encounters (Isin 2008; Kallio et al. 2020). In integrating critical race theory with citizenship studies, it is clear that the process of racialization is far from simply a macro-institutional concern—it also involves the micro-politics of fine-grained interpersonal encounters that differentially constitute modes of belonging and responsibility in multicultural and post-conflict contexts (Grosfoguel & Mielants 2006).

These findings have significance within the context of analyzing Muslim identity within literature and areas of conflict, providing a lens through which to understand the confluence of ethical norms, holy knowledge, and the politics of marginalization. This is reflected within novels such as *The Wasted Vigil* by Nadeem Aslam.

7. Research Gap and Positioning of the Present Study

There are indeed sufficient scholarship addressing Islamic epistemology, the Islamization of knowledge, epistemic violence, and the ethics of post-conflict literature. However, there is a seeming gap that becomes filled when applying such concepts to modern novels probing how sacred knowledge and secular learning intersect, particularly under the weight of racialized Muslim identities. More specifically, no one to date has

offered an Islamic epistemology reading of Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* that foregrounds both the ethical duties of sacred knowledge and the negotiation of secular learning within a world shaped by global racial and cultural hierarchies. So far, studies either zero in on literary ethics, the racialization of Islam in social and citizenship spheres, or on traditional and modern Islamic epistemology. None have threaded these strands into one coherent linkage between textual analyses and moral reflection and their socio-political contexts.

By sitting this question at the intersection of Islamic ethical reasoning, epistemological thought, and literary critique, this project presents a pointed intervention. It casts light on the moral and cognitive structures guiding the choices of characters in war-torn Afghanistan while anchoring those experiences within broader debates about knowledge production, racialized identity, and moral responsibility. As such, the study furthers an increasingly subtle view of how sacred knowledge and secular learning meet, conflict, and influence ethical decision-making in post-conflict contexts, filling both theoretical and empirical gaps in contemporary scholarship.

Research Methodology

The study employs a qualitative and interpretive methodology to examine the relationship that exists in Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* with regards to sacred knowledge and secular knowledge. The nature of this study is well suited to this methodology because it enables it to probe thoroughly into "the epistemological, ethical, ideological threads" present in *The Wasted Vigil*, which does theoretical work that "consists in close reading."

Essentially, the analysis is anchored on the Islamic epistemology, which views knowledge ('ilm) as a thing of sanctity, morality, and ethics informed by divinely revealed knowledge, as well as reason. Through a focus on classical Islamic epistemology, as well as modern ideas in Islam, it is possible to examine in this study the representation of the destruction of a sacred form of knowledge in light of modern forms of knowledge informed by colonialism, militarism, and war. The Islamic epistemology, in other words, is essentially a guiding frame in deciphering ethicalities of learning, memory, and morality.

To further inform this research, a tool of supplementary analysis is the Critical Race Theory approach. Critical Race Theory is not incorporated as the sole analytical approach; instead, it is selectively incorporated to inform how secular modes of epistemology operate within a complex of racial and cultural power relations. In integrating the Critical Race Theory approach into this analysis, a wider scope of understanding is achieved of how epistemic power is constructed and operates within the new novel. At the same time, a primary concentration on Islamic epistemology is not compromised.

Analysis combines critical reading with close reading and the exploration of selected themes. Close reading focuses on language, image, symbol, and the construction of the narrative, particularly when the texts focus on education, books, memory, belief, and the breakdown of intellectual foundations. Thematic analysis identifies the structural epistemological themes, which range from the religious construct of knowledge versus the non-religious construct of knowledge to the breakdown of moral foundations during times of conflict. These themes are analyzed from the perspective of epistemology based upon Islam with the assistance of Critical Race Theory, when necessary.

The primary texts for analysis are *The Wasted Vigil* by Nadeem Aslam, which are examined in their entirety with regard to the objectives of this study. Secondary texts for this study are the Qur'an and Hadith texts pertinent to concepts such as knowledge, justice, and responsibility, various texts pertinent to epistemology from the Islamic perspective, various texts pertinent to Critical Race Theory, and secondary texts from the literary critique pertinent to Aslam's work and post-conflict fiction.

The study will remain focused on an epistemological/ethical reading of *The Wasted Vigil*. Although the book does engage with gender issues, trauma, and geopolitics, the study will remain focused on the complex relations between knowledge systems that are sacred and those that are secular. Although CRT will help supplement the study, the book will not employ a complete reading of CRT. No comparison study will be done. In being a text-centred study, there are no human subjects; therefore, no issue of consent or confidentiality. Ethical integrity is maintained by means of proper Islamic concept exposition,

accurate depiction of theoretical constructs, and appropriate academic attribution of sources.

This is achieved by interweaving close reading with Islamic epistemology and critical perspective. This enables a rigorous gaze at how *The Wasted Vigil* is implicated in the knowledge crisis that results from modern war. This allows for a critical perspective to be taken in regard to how "the subaltern knowledge of religious knowledge is rendered peripheral in favor of secular rationality," which is contextualized in relation to larger issues of racialized and global politics.

Analysis

Advance Learning's and Islam:

Islam emphasises the value of education and knowledge as part of a comprehensive approach to human development. Islam encourages people to seek knowledge and put it to good use for humanity. Furthermore, in Islam, the concepts of justice, equality, and equity are paramount; as a result, gaining the necessary information, rationale, and abilities to carry out one's responsibilities is essential. While information is necessary for faith and souls' obligations, it is also required for economic and social well-being, communal prosperity, and promoting societal peace, liberty, and human autonomy (Nelson, 2021).

This novel depicts the opposite side of the real preaching's of Islam. i.e. "Some years ago, at a point when the Taliban could have raided the house any day, Marcus' wife had nailed the book overhead in these rooms and corridors. original thought was heresy to the Taliban and they would have burned the books, and this was the only way that suggested itself to the woman she whose mental deterioration was complete by then to save them out of harm's reach." (*The Wasted Vigil*, 2008, p.11).

Critical race theorists think that race, rather than gender, should take centre stage in legal, educational, and social policies. Education is extremely important in Muslim religion. The very first ayah, verse of the Qur'an, which was conveyed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), emphasises the importance of learning in Islam; it begins with the word "Iqr'a," which is an Arabic word that implies "learning," "exploring," and "seeking illumination." This emphasises the importance of literacy (knowledge) is the most effective approach to communicate with the Lord of all that exists. Verse

96/1-5 states: "Read! In the Name of your Lord who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not." (The Wasted Vigil, 2008, p.11).

As a reason, Muslims believe God made humans also instructed them to gain knowledge to strengthen their conviction. The necessity of learning is often underlined throughout the Qur'an, this is the primary source of wisdom for Muslims. Verse 20/114 says, "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge." The text emphasises that we have a finite amount of knowledge, and that we must continue to ask God to extend our learning. As a result, a Muslim must be on the lookout for new information at all times. (ilm).

The Taliban has been shown as closing the door of knowledge and learning on the people, especially females. i.e. "There he saw an abandoned and locked up school for girls into which, he was told, every book to be found in the city had been thrown on Taliban orders. When he put his ear to the keyhole, he could hear the sound of worms eating the millions of pages." (Aslam, 2008, p.19).

The Qur'an views knowledge as a means for all Muslims, male and female, to achieve Iman (faith) and become sincere faithfully. Which is seen in the passages: "Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit." Surah 2/269"

Islam gives importance to the learned persons on the illiterate as mentioned in the verse of Holly Quran: "Those truly fear God, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for God is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving." Surah 35/28. Would be those who understand and those who don't understand on an equal footing? Admonition is given for those that are gifted with knowledge." Surah 39/9 is the ninth surah in the Quran. The Prophet's (PBUH) hadith 3 also emphasises the importance of learning.

Hadith is a narrative that incorporates the Messenger Muhammad's words and actions, as well as his tacit acceptance of what is being said or performed in his company, as the preceding hadith related by Abu Hurairah documents: 3 The Prophet Muhammad's words and actions, as well as his tacit support of what is being said or performed in his company, are recorded in Hadith. In February of 2009, "When a human

departs from this world, his actions cease, except for three things: recurring charity, knowledge (which benefits others), or a devout child who intercedes for him (the deceased)." (Hadith 4005 in Sahih Muslim Book 12). As a result, the significance of education is explicitly stated in the Qur'an and hadith; It is obligatory in Islam to seek education, and learning is regarded to be the way to high proximity to Allah perspectives on Education's Implications in Islam. Human beings have the duty and responsibility (stewardship) to serve society and the world, according to Islam, and will be answerable for the task. Serving humanity and upholding the values of fairness for everyone are part of this. For peace and societal harmony, justice is essential.

In the story, the author portrays a highly unfavourable view of Islam, claiming that blowing up a school will make Allah and his Prophet pleased by putting an end to the pursuit of knowledge and harming Allah's creatures. i.e. "Someone has to park the vehicle and set the timer going on site. The explosion will happen hours later. You must know that Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, will be greatly happy with you" (Aslam, 2008, p.60).

As per critical race theory (1989), the prejudice that Muslims are today facing are biases produced by the sociological creation of the West, which has resulted in an ethos of intolerance against Muslims. According to Critical Race Theory, a faith that oppresses women, promotes antiquated and mediaeval ideals, and endorses aggression is a religion of tyranny. In Islam, however, there is no such concept as "fundamentalism". Critical race theorists think that race, rather than gender, should be at the centre of legal, pedagogical, and social policies.

Justice is a sacred principle in Islam, and it applies to all parts of life, from individual connections to democracy. In the struggle against poverty and injustice, including in attaining long-term development, justice is essential. In Islam, justice incorporates resources. Justice is a moral virtue in Islam, and illiteracy and lack of education make it hard to carry out fairness as stated in the Qur'an and hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH). As a result, in Islam, education and wisdom are essential for achieving social peace and equality; the Qur'an teaches that every person has a responsibility to the public.; Verse 5/2 states: "And help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one

another in sin and aggression; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah". As a result, there is little doubting that knowing the Qur'an and comprehending its economic and social ramifications would help attain justice and social parity. This can also be seen in Surah 2/269, which emphasises the value of rationality for Muslims. The Prophet (PBUH) stressed the need of education for the improvement of society, saying that in order for a Muslim to accomplish their responsibility of helping people, they must gain knowledge for the general welfare: Whoever learns knowledge of things by which the favour of God is desired for the sake of gaining some worldly benefit would not be able to smell the arf, or aroma, of Heaven. (Translation of Sunan Abu-Dawud, Knowledge (Kitab Al-Ilm), Book 25, Number 3656, Narrated by Abu-Hurayrah), The preceding ayahs, verses and hadith emphasise the value of learning and equality in Islam. Nevertheless, Muslims consider the pursuit of knowledge and its application for the benefit of humanity to be holy obligations.

Findings

The Wasted Vigil lays bare a sharp clash: the ethical call of Islam against the harsh realities imposed by extremist groups. At its core, the book centers on knowledge, justice, and social responsibility in Islamic thought. Islam treats the pursuit of knowledge as a sacred duty, a theme that weaves into the Qur'an and Hadiths. The Quran urges, "Read! In the Name of your Lord who has created" (Surah 96:1-5) and prays, "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (Surah 20:114), underlining that learning is a continuing duty for spiritual improvement and enhancement of society. Hadith literature reinforces this, presenting knowledge as a perpetual form of charity that benefits humanity. Sahih Muslim, Book 12, Hadith 4005 states it. What it means, in short, is that knowledge is both a personal obligation and a communal trust; knowledge empowers Muslims to uphold justice, fairness, and human dignity. Nelson (2021)

In contrast, Aslam's story comes after the Taliban's gag on education, particularly for females, made schools and books the targets to hinder the divine decree on learning. This opposition violates Islam's ethical and epistemic core and illustrates how denial of knowledge negates faith at a personal level-known as Iman-and societal health. The novel

thus exposes the distortions of Islamic precepts by extremists and their locales of ethical crisis.

Further, the text has demonstrated, through the Critical Race Theory perspective, the racist and political dimensions of oppression that have been imposed on Muslim communities. The silencing of knowledge by the Taliban mirrors broader global biases and systemic inequities in education and civic participation. According to CRT, such experiences are socially constructed and have nothing to do with pure religious dictation; rather, they operate under prejudice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

All in all, the analysis shows that Islam uses knowledge as an important tool for spiritual growth, social justice, and communal bonding. On the other hand, The Wasted Vigil presents a complete contrast: violence and learning suppression, especially against women, showing how it threatens ethical and epistemic ideals when extremist readings of faith are practiced. It shows the value of combining Islamic ethical frameworks with contemporary critical theories in the study of how literature reflects morality, knowledge, and social justice during conflict.

Recommendations

With this in mind, I draw a couple of key takeaways for scholars and practitioners working on the ethical, educative, and social roles that Islam can play in contexts of conflict: First, we need more work that commingles Islamic ethical thought with modern literary analysis and sociopolitical inquiry. Future projects could look at more post-conflict narratives to see how ideas of knowledge, justice, and mercy are portrayed and debated across different cultures and power landscapes. Such work would shed light on how Islamic epistemology intersects with human rights and how literature represents these tensions.

Second, educational policy in Muslim communities should reemphasize an often invoked divine mandate of gaining knowledge as well as press for inclusiveness and equity. This new novel shows how fanatic ideas impede learning, particularly for women, and damage personal well-being as well as societal well-being. Leaders and teachers should be encouraged to plan curricula and structures of school systems that offer ample opportunities for critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and equal availability of education to

all, securing the pursuit of knowledge according to Islamic values and superior values of liberal society. Third, we need to address issues of racialized conceptions and systemic prejudices that Muslims face globally. Critical Race Theory helps explain how entrenched inequalities and stereotypes contribute to Muslim marginalization, shaping daily life and public conversation. Such education, media, and policy should actively challenge narratives, make space for dialogue and representation, and comprehend the diversity within Muslim identities.

Finally, literature and culture shall be treasured in their potential to foster ethical reflection and social critique. It is here that writers, academics, and teachers have a duty to use texts such as *The Wasted Vigil* in the expose of moral ambiguities of war, the sanctity of life preservation, and knowledge. Such multidisciplinary focus will create societies that are socially conscious, ethically responsible, and in harmonious balance with spiritual, intellectual, and collective interests. Put together, these contributions make the case for bringing together Islamic ethics, critical social theory, and an education of praxis in the service of promoting justice, knowledge, and human dignity, particularly in contexts marked by violence and racialized oppression.

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