

# The Violence of Silence: Examining Nadeem Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden*

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## Abstract

Silence is an inextricable aspect of violence, appearing as a consequence of violent acts or functioning as an ally to perpetuate suppression. Despite its ubiquity, silence as a concept has not received enough attention in academic studies on violence, often being ignored or privileged over speech and action. With a focus on Nadeem Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden*, this paper aims to explore the concept of violence and its relation to silence in the context of the US-led invasion into Afghanistan following the 9/11 terror attacks. The novel juxtaposes the troubled yet silent lives of ordinary individuals against the cacophony of the US military's War on Terror on the one hand and the dissonant, open resistance of Islamist forces on the other. In doing so, Aslam amplifies the voice of marginalised communities that are otherwise neglected in the post-9/11 discourse. Living on the edges of war and simultaneously in its midst, the characters experience silence in myriad, often interconnected yet distinct ways: as a consequence of or response to American hegemony, patriarchal hegemony, religious oppression, as well as conscientious silence rooted in a refusal or an inability to express. Yet, silence is not always a result of violence, in many instances it is violence itself. Silence also functions as a marker of resistance in both private and public realms. In addition, in Aslam's novel, silence serves as a discursive strategy employed to excavate the many layers of violence that shape the lives of those impacted by the war in Afghanistan.

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