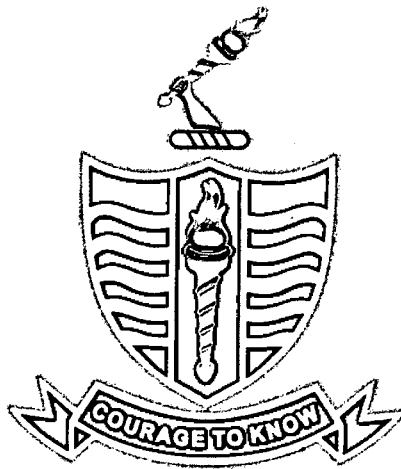


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Editorial

Times are changing and so are we. Emotionally, psychologically and socially, we have evolved as human beings but this has resulted in an even more complex constitution of the definition of a human being. It is a challenge to give shape to the chaos of clashing ideologies, norms, standards and innovations required to make a society a somewhat homogenized existence. The way we express and communicate needs a direction so convincing and tangible that even complex ideas get registered in the mind's exploratory domain.

This world is based on learning through trial and error and ultimately arriving at truths. Research is the truth of individuals who wish to construct the pivots to the compass of an ever enlarging canvas of world academics. Advancements in media, technology and artistic domains present a plethora of possibilities for literary exploration where every uttered word and discovery becomes a script for pursuing new ideals. The world is getting progressively secular with the centre of the universe shifting towards unknown horizons, and research is becoming more experimental and penetrating with a correspondingly more stratified character of worldly existence.

With endless questioning arising in the whirlpool of today, modern research is confronted with the daunting task of introducing a truth, individually owned by the researcher, to a collective domain of scholars, researchers and students of the global village. Constructive criticism paves the path for a more polished approach in the future with persuasive literary techniques evolving simultaneously. Even the issues that were marginalized and neglected in the past enjoy the limelight of the researcher's pen that shapes not only his ideas, but the way readers respond and evolve their perspective. Hence, the importance of appropriate selection of words from the medium of language must always occupy the forefront.

Respecting every genuine researcher's findings is important as they are statements of his mind's cognitive probe. We must grapple with realities at odds with our own and suspending judgments is not easy. It must be remembered that a common, contemporarily aligned platform will enable the progress of research towards a more futuristic haven of inquiry enlightening generations to come. On a positive note, it is encouraging to see confident researchers coming forward, sharing their ideas, and daring to make a difference.

Our primary objective in writing research articles must not be just getting them published, but to promote the healthy development of the mindset of mankind. Limiting oneself just to trending possibilities leads to saturation in research which we must avoid. Honest and original expression of what we perceive leads to a greater possibility of chiseling the domain of literature into a wholesome and sincere declaration of its authenticity. Therefore, research is not just a corporate business with potential writers vying or competing for infinite publications. The focus must be on making a difference.

To conclude, as researchers, we can face many academic, institutional, resource-oriented and methodical challenges; however, when we are resolute enough, our research is influential enough to add to society the literary ingredients that creatively and stylistically mould the medium of effective communication. Wish you all the best for your creative journey through *Explorations* 2016.

Sumbal Maqsood

Editor

Construction of the Orient through the West's Strategic Location of Power in John Updike's *Terrorist*

Atif Ameer

Abstract

*This research paper is an attempt to highlight the ways adopted by John Updike to rob the voice of the Orientals. Updike in *Terrorist* paints the image of Islam and Orientals using stereotyped fallacies. Updike misrepresents Muslim women through the lenses of the Holy Quran to further extend the superiority of the West and the inferiority of Orientals. This study also identifies and rectifies the mistranslation of Quranic verses used as legitimizing power for unleashing brutalities upon women. *Terrorist* establishes Muslim characters as despotic, parochial and anti-progressive, whereas secular characters are rational, pluralist and modern. Hence, this study focuses on the inadequate development of Muslim characters compared to the glorification of secular characters. Furthermore, this paper also explores the frequent use of strategic location of power by Updike in order to broaden the dominant racist discourse. Updike frequently reinforces his strategic location and underlines his alignment with the western forces. At a macro level, this research article establishes the failure of Updike to cross cultural*

and ideological frontiers in order to present 'Others'.

This paper is an attempt to investigate Updike's partiality in the construction of the picture of an Oriental and the manner in which he treats the various subjects like Islam, Muslim women, relationship between East and West, Islamic Terrorism and misinterpretation of Quran in a mystified fashion. John Updike attempts to exhibit the contorted picture of reality with an established authority. The readers are exposed to half-truths, xenophobia and distortion of actuality to establish greater stereotyping and typecasting. It unveils how the Terrorist establishes the enlightening role of the West in helping the East to liberate itself from the clutches of backwardness, ignorance and savagery. The technique used by Updike in order to crystallize his aims is Strategic location or location of manipulative power.

Keywords: Strategic, Terrorist, Islamic, Oriental, Manipulative.

The ideological position of the writer is referred to as 'Strategic location' or 'location of manipulative power'. Western writers possess strategic location or a location of manipulative power, from which the writer writes a text, and that text becomes the component of the grand Strategic Formation or Discourse where the Oriental studies reside. Edward Said writes "My principal methodological device for studying authority here is what can be called *strategic location*, which is a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about. Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate

himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, the location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kind of images, themes, motifs, that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf” (Said 19). Hence, every writer who creates any text about the Orient usually aligns his sympathies with either the Orient or the West, hence defining his or her Strategic Location. This affiliation with one side gives them the required location to infuse the prevalent themes and images of the side woven into the texts. John Updike’s association is certainly with the West in *Terrorist*; hence the writing is presented from the perspective of Western Strategic Location of Power. The word ‘Western’ here indicates the ideological position Updike takes while representing his material and strategic location. The word ‘location’ means Updike’s choice of a certain style, themes, images, and motifs over the other available choices and their interlocking to paint the image of the Orient. Finally, the word *strategy* refers to the injection of personal criticism and prejudices into the text to make it more coherent with the constitution of a larger body of discourse and to make the text more purposeful.

The ultimate purpose that post-9/11 narratives written from a Western perspective seek to achieve is that they present Muslims living among them as the ‘Oriental Others’ that pose a threat to the society and therefore have no right to live. The old Orientalist discourse has gained impetus soon after the tragic 9/11. The attacks on twin towers once again underline the division between “us” and “them”. Once again, there emerges a need to employ Orientalism as Said refers to it: “as a textual grid through which an Orient is filtered into the Western consciousness” (Said 6). After 9/11 and post-cold war era, the new Western supremacy has been

challenged by its new enemy, Islam, having more fundamentalist and intolerant tendencies towards the West. The general perception of Islam as a parochial, barbaric, fanatical and cruel religion begins to nurture the antagonistic feelings in the West against Muslims, the East and anything related to Islam. At the same time, the West and particularly America is not in a position to boycott the East because of their vested interests. "The vastly expanded American political and economic role in the Near East (the Middle East) makes great claims on our understanding of the Orient" (Said 12). Hence, the only option they are left with is to revisit the old Oriental discourse again and to employ that discourse in a new form: Neo-Orientalism. Neo-Orientalism can be defined as:

a mode of representation, while indebted to classical Orientalism, engenders new tropes of othering. Neo-Orientalism entails a popular mode of representing, a kind of *doxa* (common belief) about the Middle East and Muslims that is disseminated throughout the world. Neo-Orientalism is monolithic, totalizing, reliant on a binary logic, and based on an assumption of moral and cultural superiority of the West over the Oriental other. Neo-Orientalism should be understood as a supplement to enduring modes of Orientalist representation. (Edwards 13)

In order to expose the dark side of the Orientals, Islam and its association with Terrorism, Updike portrayed few major Muslim characters (Orientals) in *Terrorist*: Ahmad, Omar Ashmawy and Shiekh Rashid. They are presented as bigoted, narrow-minded and hostile towards other people irrespective of their faith and nationality. They believe in exterminating every single person who does not obey the faith they follow. Furthermore, Updike tries to float an idea that their bitter and

hostile behavior is an outcome of the teachings of Islam. A Non-Muslim reader will eventually believe after reading the novel that the Muslim characters presented are the actual representatives of Islam. Again, this sort of representation is a result of Updike's misconceptions about Islam and he wants to evoke a negative response from the readers in the form of condemnation. He wants to extend his personal perception into a collective experience, so that the readers would abhor the intolerant attitude of Muslims. On the other hand, he paints the secular characters in positive colours. Updike presents a degenerated Jew and a Christian who act as an anti-thesis of Ahmad and Shiekh Rashid respectively. These secular characters adhere to the ideals of democracy, liberty, equality and freedom. They are imbued with flawless characteristics by Updike, which help in winning applause of the readers. The already repulsive image of Muslim characters (Orientals) gets more magnified in front of peaceful and loving secular characters. Marshall Boswell in his article "Updike, Religion and the Novel of Moral Debate" writes:

Updike injects different kind of morality in Secular characters against orthodox Muslim characters and he leaves the final verdict in the hands of readers. But in *Terrorist*, Updike's treatment of this strategy is different. He is urging and forcing readers to give more weightage to Secular characters and look down upon Muslims. (Boswell 12)

Hence, there would be a detailed comparison of Jack Levy with Ahmad and Omar Ashmawy. This comparison would establish the fact that both Ahmad and Omar Ashmawy collectively cannot outshine the overshadowing representation given to Levy. This exploration of inadequacy of representation is

established by comparing Jack Levy and Omar Ashmawy and later on contrasting Jack Levy with Ahmad. Jack Levy is a relapsed Jew who is married to Berth, who is a Lutheran (Protestant Christian) by faith. On the other hand Omar, who is a Muslim, is married to the Catholic, Terry. The marriage of Omar and Terry proves to be an utter failure and an act of opportunism on the part of Omar. In contrast, the marriage of Levy and Berth is referred to as "brave marriage" (Updike 25) by the narrator. Through this, Updike tries to convey that despite the differences between faiths and ideological positions, there is a stable relationship between both of them. This denotes the interfaith harmony and religious tolerance present in the people of the West. As the narrator says: "despite different faiths, they have ground down to lackluster sameness" (25). Furthermore, the character of Omar Ashmawy is portrayed as irresponsible husband and "chauvinistic" (86). He is deeply immersed into negative colours. Terry tells Levy that she marries Omar because: "love mostly with him being, as you know exotic, third-world, put-upon, and my marrying him showing how liberal and liberate I was" (86). Omar marries her to fulfill his aspirations of getting fortunes and meeting his material ends. But when he realizes that he is not going to get anything out of her, he leaves her alone with the child, Ahmad. So, this is an image of the typical Oriental in Orientalist discourse, who travels to the West, having dreams of getting materialistic objects. But as soon as these dreams shatter, he loses his self-control and conscience. Omar is shown as a very selfish and heartless person, who even after leaving his family alone "never sent a post card or check for 15 years" (89). The very brief portrayal of Omar intensifies the deteriorating image of Muslims as it signifies that he (Muslim) is very selfish who doesn't even care for his own children. Only what matters for him is his own self and desires. The very brief and inadequate

representation of Omar is paralleled by exaggerated positive and liberal portrayal of Jack Levy and his married life.

Levy is depicted as a responsible husband who accepts the rights of his wife and he respects her with all his heart. For Levy, "she is a person" (164), whereas, according to Omar: "a woman should serve a man, not try to own him" (84). Levy does have some personal reservations with his wife Berth. i.e. he doesn't like her physical appearance; she is corpulent, she snores loudly. But Levy never let his personal complaints overshadow their relationship and never complains about these things in front of Berth. This shows the compromising attitude of Levy and how the relationship matters more than everything. In the case of Omar, Updike shows it is the lust of fortune that matters. Levy even defends his wife on certain occasions. When Terry says that Berth is the victim of obesity, Jack Levy immediately interrupts and clears the stance by saying: "she cannot help being fat" (207). As Omar completely abandoned his family and never wrote back for 15 years, this shows that his conscience and sense of guilt are no more alive. He is callous about human emotions and relations. However, when the affair between Levy and Ahmad's mother Terry reaches its climax, suddenly the conscience of Levy starts jolting his soul for betraying his wife and her emotions. Levy acts like a swinging pendulum having extremes of sensual need and guilty conscience. He continuously oscillates between these extremes and eventually capitulates in front of his conscience. Soon after his extra-marital affair with Terry, Levy suffers from psychological turmoil which springs out from the thought that what would happen if Berth comes to know about this act of deception. Hence, this feeling of guilt finally becomes the reason for the breakup between Levy and Terry. Terry feels that there is

always a shadow of Berth present between them and Levy cannot liberate his mind from Berth even when he is with her.

Furthermore, all the positive adjectives and phrases are uttered for Levy by other characters and Omar Ashmawy becomes the victim of contempt and anger of other characters in *Terrorist*. Berth has very positive and enchanting views for her husband. According to Berth, Levy is a very “loving husband” (134). At the same time he is “sensitive to people” (136); that is why he remains very cautious in dealing with other people. The narrator mentions in the text that Berth knows that she is a burden upon Levy, but she is also sure that Levy would never leave her, unlike Omar who abandoned his family straightaway. As the narrator mentions at one point that Levy “would never leave her corpulent Berth” (158). Berth also confirms that both live a very “good life together” (137). These words of praise are not only limited to Berth, but Terry has also similar views about Levy and very disgusting views about her husband Omar. Terry uses the words like “a great guy, sweet, saint” (208) for Levy, which affirms his positive behavior. Even after having a sexual relationship with Levy, Terry says: “she knows he will never desert his wife: his Jewish sense of responsibility and sentimental loyalty, which must be Jewish too” (122). Terry’s views are utterly opposite for Omar; according to her, Omar is “irresponsible, opportunistic and clueless loser” (89), who married her only to acquire a green card and to fulfill his American dream. For Terry, Omar is a “coward who always looks for shortcuts” (240). Hence, Omar’s ego-centric behavior is placed parallel to Levy’s self-denial in order to keep others happy. By the contrast between both marriages, we come to know that Levy and Berth are very accommodating. Despite their differences in faith, they are living a blissful life and they have the capacity to change their lives for the satisfaction of others. As Levy says: “Berth is

willing to change and bend herself" (30). On the other hand, Omar married Terry only to exploit her. He has no care for the love Terry has for him. Hence, Updike is directing the reader to place Omar on the immoral and unethical pedestal, and see Levy with the lenses of morality, righteousness and respect.

Apart from Omar, we can also draw a comparison between Levy and Shiekh Rashid. The narrator unfolds the role of Shiekh Rashid in disintegrating the present and future of Ahmad. He is presented as solely responsible for creating a sense of profound confusion in the mind of Ahmad and thus compelling him to execute a terrorist attack. It is Shiekh Rashid who forces Ahmad to give up his studies and to join truck driving as profession because "more education he feared might degenerate his beliefs" (216). On the other hand, Levy acts as a guardian of Ahmad. He foresees the negative instincts in Ahmad and discusses the matter with him time and again. When he realizes that Ahmad has a very rigid ideological position, he goes to Ahmad's mother, Terry, in order to seek her help to push Ahmad back from the darkness he is entering. At regular intervals, he offers his help to Ahmad even in seeking admission to college. He is the first person to recognize that someone is exerting his influence over Ahmad's mind and his doubts about religious fanaticism prove to be true later. The climax of Levy's uprightness can be viewed from the narrative that at the end of the novel, he risks his own life in order to stop Ahmad from carrying a terrorist attack and provoking the moment of realization in Ahmad's heart. After getting into the truck, Levy in a few minutes subverts and deconstructs the radical ideas Ahmad has been carrying in his mind since his childhood. It is confirmed from the narrative, that if Levy had not convinced Ahmad, Ahmad would have carried out the attack. At that point, Ahmad recalls the instructions given by Quran that preaches humanity. Ahmad

reflects on a while that "God does not want us to destroy: it was He who made the world" and "He does not want us to desecrate His creation by willing death" (306). Hence, Levy is successful in projecting the view of Islam that gratifies secular ideologies as well. After saving America from attack, Levy also guides Ahmad how to avoid any blame and how to re-construct his life again. This characteristic of Levy deserves reader's admiration and acclaim. This example also serves to understand the relationship of enlightenment between West and East. Levy's depicting Western ideals enlightens the Eastern backwardness represented by Ahmad. This also symbolizes that the West has the capacity to teach and direct the East to the right path, like Levy guides Ahmad for taking him away from the ideas of ignorance and brutality.

Now a comparison is drawn between Ahmad and Levy, which would consolidate the fact that Updike is biased in the creation of the Orientals and gives inadequate representation to them. The position of both Ahmad and Levy on American Secular society is subject to comparison for understanding their basic mental and ideological constitution. Both Ahmad and Levy have some reservations regarding American materialistic structure of society which does not address the fulfillment of spiritual needs. Ahmad has the blinkered vision of America as being one of the lands that "discharge a stench of waste and greed, of sensuality, and futility, of the despair and lassitude that come with ignorance of the inspired wisdom of the Prophet" (233). Ahmad has also deplorable views about the environment of his school: "All day long, at Central High School, girls sway and sneer and expose their soft-bodies and alluring hair. Their bare bellies, adorned with shining naval studs and low-down purple tattoos, asks, what else is there to see? Boys strut and saunter along and look dead-eyed. Indicating with their edgy killer gestures and careless scornful

laughs and that this world is all there is – a noisy varnished hall lined with metal lockers and having at its end a blank wall desecrated by graffiti and roller-painted over so often it feels to be coming closer by millimeters” (3). Ahmad takes a more radical stance of the American society by reinforcing his ‘otherness’ in the acutest form possible by saying: “ The teachers, weak Christians and nonobservant Jews, make a show of teaching virtue and righteous self-restraint, but their shifty eyes and hollow voices betray their lack of belief. They are paid to say things, they lack true faith: they are not on the straight path: they are unclean” (4). Hence, we can see that the waves of unrest originated in Ahmad due to secular, liberal and sexually-obsessed environment of American society. The faith of people of America is not in line with Ahmad’s faith, so he abhors the people and society of America. On the other hand, unrest in Levy is because of the recollection of bygone days. He misses the simplicity and innocence of earlier life and is worried about the effects of digital revolution on American society. There is a never- ending unprecedented competition among people to acquire digital products and they have forgotten the simplicity of life. From this, we can observe the kind of reaction and position Ahmad and Levy take about America’s materialistic society. Levy is not blaming people for the kind of life they are living. He is willing to understand it is the need of time to accommodate one in this revolutionary world. One cannot keep away from this modern age. According to Levy: “all the economic forces are pushing instant gratification and credit-card debt at them. Society does not let them be innocent any more” (205). On the other side, Ahmad is shifting all the blame on the people. He believes that people here have averted their eyes from God and the right path so they are themselves responsible for the degeneration of society, “because it

[Western culture] has no God, it is obsessed with sex and luxury goods" (38). So, we can observe that Updike does not let Levy rest all blame on people but Ahmad is laying down all blame on American people and continuously attacking them with verbal arsenal.

Both of the characters exhibit different sense of loyalty to the country they are part of. Levy has been assimilated into the American identity, whereas Ahmad remains an outcast from the first page of novel till the end. Levy has given up his Jewishness in order to delve into American society, and he presents the complete ideals of American society. At one point, he wishes to take part in the Vietnam War to exhibit "his love for his country America" (143). This shows Levy's strong sense of faithfulness to America. Ahmad detests America and American lifestyle because it "trivializes religion" (39). For Ahmad, the faith matters more than nationality and belongingness. Even Levy guides Ahmad by saying: "come on, we're all Americans here. That's the idea" (301). But the rigid ideological position Ahmad has taken at the very young age directs him to hate every single person who does not share his faith irrespective of his nationality. In Ahmad's views, all the people of America "lack true faith" (3) and are "wanton and self-indulgent" (4). It becomes apparent that Ahmad holds contempt for Americans only because they are not Muslims.

Similarly, Ahmad's forbearance is also compared with secular characters in the text, whereas secular characters are presented as humble and accommodating. When Joryleen, Ahmad's school fellow, shows her inclination towards Ahmad's faith by saying that she wants to go to the Mosque with Ahmad, Ahmad loses his endurance and says: "We could not sit together, and you could not attend without a course of instruction and a

demonstration of sincerity” (69). Through this, Updike intended the kind of rigidity present in Islam which is opposite to the accommodating and flexible nature of Joryleen. Updike aims at reinforcing the intolerance of Islam through comparing the attitudes and behaviors of Muslims with those of non-Muslims. Updike builds up a connection between Ahmad’s intolerance and the teachings of Islam. When Joryleen thanks Ahmad for coming and listening to her musical performance, he replies that “we should know our enemy” (68). Joryleen replies that she has no enemies here; all of them are her friends. To which Ahmad says: “my teacher at the mosque says that all unbelievers are our enemies. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) said that eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed” (68). Hence, the reader would deduce that the teachings of Prophet and Islam are forcing people like Ahmad to launch a series of violent attacks on non-Muslims because their faith is legitimizing such attacks. By making Ahmad confirm the intolerant nature of Islam, Updike visualizes that he could add authority to his depiction.

In a nutshell, the reader can perceive how all the beastly, violent and deplorable characteristics have been attached to Orientals. This is a use of Strategic location of power by Updike. The omniscient narrator establishes the fact that Muslim characters or Orientals have “no emotion” and “no human response” (248). After reading this novel, readers will definitely feel no sympathy with any Muslim character; they will receive derogatory remarks from readers. There is not even a single admirable quality attached to Orientals. Both Ahmad and Shiekh Rashid are engulfed by their own metaphysical problems of existence; hence they should not be allowed to represent the actual image of Islam. The image that Updike offers of Islam through Orientals is uni-dimensional, orthodox and despotic. Ahmad has only two options: either to

assimilate into western culture or stick to the Islamic rules. There is no point of reconciliation presented by Updike which is very unfair and biased on the part of Updike. According to Updike, the image of Islam repudiates all the basic principles of modernity and democracy: individual freedom, freedom of expression and liberty. Throughout the narrative, the neo-Orientalist position of Updike remains enacted. Islam's and Orient's "otherness" is established in the novel. Hence, the novel establishes the superiority of West (Secular characters) over the Orient (Muslim characters). The Secular characters stand for rationality, pluralism, modernity and on the other hand, Muslim characters symbolize rigidity, despotism, parochialism and anti-progressive approach.

This section of the research paper explores the biased views of John Updike on how Islamic doctrines are shaped with regard to women as instructed by the Holy Quran. Oriental women are generally portrayed as suppressed and helpless creatures who have to accept the position of servitude enforced by Islamic injunctions. Quran is considered as the root cause for giving moral and legal justification for every act of savageness unleashed upon women. Again, John Updike's 'Western Strategic location' gives him impetus to act as an authority to misconstrue the higher authority of Muslims. i.e. Quran. He speaks with so definitive a voice that it becomes difficult for the reader to distinguish whether his arguments are vivid or mystified with prejudices. This misrepresentation of Muslim Women through the lenses of Holy Quran using his location of power is an attempt to further extend the superiority of the West and the inferiority of Orientals. The barbaric behavior and uncivil nature of Orientals towards women justifies their inferiority and adds up extra responsibility on the West to identify the problem, address it and eventually take steps to rectify it. There is definitely a purpose behind depicting the

cruelties unchained upon Oriental women by their counterparts. Firstly, it brings out the Quran and Islam as antithetical and unsympathetic of Western Modernity and democratic values (the main stimulus for the protagonist Ahmad in the novel to carry out a terrorist attack). As Updike says in one of his interviews: "Islam doesn't have as many shades of grey as Christian or the Judaic faith does. It's fairly absolutist, as you know, and you are either in or not" (Deyab 6). Secondly, this attitude of Muslim men towards Oriental women establishes them as cruel, suppressive and inhuman in order to label the West with more refined and cultured notions and giving them authority to conquer and civilize the East, as Spivak says: "White men saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 287). Thirdly, John Updike using his Western Strategic Location also tries to present a modern, democratic society, where Oriental women can enjoy their full freedom irrespective of binary divisions.

The Orientalist supposition about gender is apparent throughout the *Terrorist*. As Edward Said in 'Orientalism' presents the model of Oriental woman after Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian girl. "She never spoke of herself; she never represented her emotions, presence, or history" (Said 1978). The same school of thought is reinforced in *Terrorist*; firstly there is no female Muslim character who shows her individual voice and representation. Secondly, the inferior status and position of Women in Islam is justified using the voice of Muslim men, i.e. Ahmad and Shaikh Rashid. One is not able to comprehend whether this is the narrator's voice or the views of characters. Muslim characters are also forced to frequently use disparaging remarks about women to exhibit feminine inferiority. Here, Updike's location of power encompasses half-Quranic verses, prejudiced translations, mystified suggestions and unreliable sources. His

personal biased views and interpretations are more visible and overshadowing throughout the text because Islam has never been unkind and brutal to women as represented by John Updike through Muslim characters. Now moving particularly to the text of the *Terrorist* and exploring how Updike used the notion of Strategic Location of Power to propagate his philosophy about Islam and Muslim women using Muslim voices to validate his opinion and articulate it in a more emphatic manner. Updike uses his mystified understanding of the Quran by manipulating Quranic verses to prove the inferior status of women prescribed by Quranic teachings.

In *Terrorist*, John Updike frequently makes use of selective Quranic verses with definitive purpose without any contextualization, giving no heed to the fact that every verse is revealed with a particular background and detaching that verse from its background and circumstances is nothing but utter injustice and ignorance. This outlook is noticeable when Updike reinforces the false notion that Quran and Islam declare women as polluted objects. According to the narrator, the Quran labels women as filthy and impure. For example, the narrator tells us that "The Quran talked of uncleanness but only with regard to women, their menstruation, their Suckling of infants" (165). The narrator upholds his allegation without providing the exact Quranic verse; instead of it he says "in the verse before that, he [Ahmad] reads that women are pollution" (156). When the protagonist, Ahmad, seeks guidance from Quran regarding sexual advice, he comes to know that the impurity is associated with women. Instead of providing the conditions under which this verse is applicable and without giving the preceding verses, Updike declares women as pollution. Soon after this, the narrator again uses a displaced Quranic verse to further consolidate his argument by quoting from

Quran that reads: "Separate yourselves therefore from women and approach them not until they are cleansed" (156). The manipulation of verses in a very balanced way creates trouble for the reader to ascertain that this verse is actually pointing towards the stage of women's menstruation. Now if we ponder upon the complete verse of the Holy Quran, we will come to know that the word pollution refers to menstruation, not women. The complete translation of this verse is: "They question thee (O Muhammad P.B.U.H) concerning menstruation. Say: It is an illness, so let women alone at such times and go not in unto them till they are cleansed. And when they have purified themselves, then go in unto them as Allah hath enjoined upon you. Truly Allah loves those who turn unto Him, and loves those who have a care for cleanliness" (Al-Baqarah 2:222). This actual verse reflects a very different understanding of the same idea floated by Updike without having knowledge of Holy Quran. The actual meaning of this verse is to avoid sexual intercourse during women's menstruation because it could be harmful for both men and women. It is evident from this example that Updike selects, dissects, displaces and manipulates the Quranic verses in order to portray a negative picture of Islam. In reality, this notion of women's impurity has no connection with Islamic values and teaching. This idea might have stemmed from his close reading of the Old Testament, because this concept has its roots in the Book of Leviticus (Old Testament). But his partial attitude towards Islam urges him to associate this idea with Islam. As in the Book of Leviticus, it is written that:

When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurities of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Anyone who touches

her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. (Leviticus 15)

Furthermore, Updike makes use of Quran's Arabic transliteration in order to reinforce his authentic claims and profound knowledge he has about Islam and its so-called disintegrating values. By giving false transliterations of the original text, Updike is creating a sense of confusion and ambiguity for western and non-Muslim readers to believe him straight away and to rate Islam in lowest terms. By doing this, he is referring to his strategic location again and again that is the West and anti-East or anti-Islam. Again when we scrutinize the text, we discover that Shiekh Rashid is injecting the spirit of Jihad in Ahmad by labeling children and wives as the enemies of men. Because of them, men can step back from taking up arms against the enemies of Islam. Hence, children and wives are also enemies of men if they stop or become a reason for any sort of hesitation on the part of men in the process of Jihad. Hence Updike uses Shiekh Rashid as his mouthpiece to utter the lines which he wants him to utter. The original text of the Quran is mentioned in *Terrorist* as "ta'fu wa tasfahu wa taghfiru afa and sahafa": now the original meaning of this line is "forgive and overlook, and cover up their faults". But in *Terrorist*, soon after this ayah, Updike writes "abstain and run away! Do without women of non-Heavenly flesh, this earthly baggage, these unclean hostages to fortune! Travel light, straight into the paradise!" (106). Hence, the reader is unable to identify the real meaning of these Quranic words, but he adheres to Updike's own interpretation. Updike makes Shiekh Rashid mistranslate the words "afa and sahafa" giving them meaning of "abstain and turn away", where the actual meaning of these words is "forgive and overlook". So Updike is again reinforcing the

impurity of women by saying that the filthiness of women can stop men from the pure act of Jihad by their sexual instincts; hence, it is advisable for men to “abstain and turn away” from these impure creatures. Again, we can trace the influence of Old Testament on the mind of Updike here, because again this concept has its roots in the Old Testament. As it says: “No wickedness comes anywhere near the wickedness of a woman. Sin began with a woman and thanks to her, we all must die” (Ecclesiastes 25, 19, 24). But on the other hand, Islam always gives equal respect and dignity to women as it gives to men. Both of them have equal worth in the eyes of Allah. As Holy Quran says: “We have created (their companions) of special creation. And made them virgin-pure-Beloved, equal in age, -For the companions of the right hand,” (Quran 56:35-38). And “O Mankind, Be dutiful to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate (of same kind) and from them twain has spread a multitude of men and women:” (Quran 4-1). These few examples from the text show how unfairly Updike makes use of his Strategic location to create a world of falsehood and distortion. His strategic location which binds him with the West mystifies his vision to the extent that he manipulates the sacred book of Allah in a manipulative way that a person having little knowledge of Islam can easily accept what he has written.

Hence, Updike makes use of his location of power or strategic location in order to misrepresent the disposition of a Muslim woman which has its connection with political and ideological shape of imperialist discourse. Such representation of Muslim women as sufferers of Islamic policies is basically used to build up a moral justification for the extension of imperialism. Clearly, Updike's exposition is motivated by prevalent claims and prejudiced outlook on Islam. Updike does not refer to any Muslim

scholars to consolidate his claims because Muslim scholars' view would reflect a totally reverse image of what Updike tries to show. Updike repeatedly loads his narrative with Quranic verses using manipulative technique to show that his narrative is based on evidence extracted from the Other's Book. His use of mistranslations proves that his narrative lacks plausibility and objectivity as well, because it presents his personal misunderstandings rather than what the Other really believes in. Therefore, I argue that his presentation of Islam is not a result of an objective examination, but a reproduction of the general myths about Islam.

It has been established through the study that Updike painted Orientals and their religion on the foundation of stereotyped myths and fallacies. In an interview, Updike says that in order to collect information about Islam, he read a few books: *The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks* by Shaul Shay, *The Koran for Dummies* by Sohaib Sultan and *Islam Today* by Akbar S. Ahmed. The question that concerns this study is whether the knowledge gained from these sources is sufficient to qualify Updike as a representative of true Islam. Apparently, many misconceptions about Islam are adopted and become predominant in the novel. Updike had an access to objective facts about Islam, but he ignored them. This paper is also highlighting the methods used by the West in order to rob the voice of the East and concentrates on the dominant racist discourse present in the narrative. Updike orientalizes various aspects of Islam in *Terrorist* i.e. women, jihad etc. The violent nature of Islam and characters representing Islam are consolidated by the verses from the Holy Quran in order to establish an air of authority and objectivity. Notwithstanding the fact that the verses are mistranslated and dissected in order to achieve the plan, but for a non-Muslim these

kinds of Quranic references are enough to believe whatever is said in the narrative. Throughout the narrative, Updike tries to project his individual perceptions as collective experience. Furthermore, Ahmad and Shiekh Rashid are represented as extensions of the whole Islamic community which is very unfair.

This study also investigated the depiction of Muslim characters in comparison to secular characters. Muslim characters are painted as mirror-images of Islamic values and principles. They are not fully developed and inadequately represented. Ahmad is insufficiently developed, one-dimensional, without a past before taking up the mission and uncertain future after his surrender. There is no psychological dilemma about the moral bearing of his action which he has to overcome. He is a single-minded madman with no fear or retribution. His language is overtly Quranic and he sounds like a 'mullah' rather than an eighteen year old boy. James Wood suggests that the weakness of the novel lies in its struggle to "capture the lineaments of a specific variety of Islamic mind. It is the otherness of the Islamicism that is missing in the book. There is a sense that what is alien in Islam to a westerner remains alien to John Updike." What he has been successful in creating yet again is stock stereotypical view of Islam and the Oriental culture reinforcing the construction of threat rather than singling out its sources and the response that is appropriate to it. Hence, there are loopholes in the construction of the Orientals.

The question of Orientalist feminism has also been considered in this study. Updike manipulated the Quranic verses in order to show the downgraded status of Women in Islam. In order to extend this notion, the Muslim characters are frequently passing derogatory remarks about women. Furthermore, he is urging a reader to draw a comparison between Muslim and Secular

characters. The ideology of Islam is based on myths and superstitions whereas Secularism is based on scientific inquiry and rational principles. The secular characters represent the epitome of American ideals like liberty, freedom and equality. Updike's presentation of both Muslim and secular characters proves his bias for secularism. He favours secular characters over Muslims. All secular characters have a permissive attitude because they are not connected to any religion that claims superiority. Updike believes that traditional religions create fanatics. Religion cultivates hatred and discrimination; hence, it is discarded in secular thinking.

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Exploring the Forbidden Realms in Pakistani Literature

Mumtaz Ahmed

Abstract

Homosexuality in Pakistan is a wide-spread and well-known phenomenon, yet the least discussed and clandestine as well, due to its sacrilegious status, as homosexuality is forbidden in Islam. Since LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community in Pakistan is one of the persecuted communities_ despised by religion, scrutinized by Government and out-casted by society_ queers in Pakistan are bound to hide their identities in order to save their lives. The marginalization of queers is not only confined to State and Society, but also civil societies, Media and political bodies are also equally responsible for fuelling the already fiercely-burning fire of ostracism. Modern Pakistani English literature has gained enormous attention through its bold and unique theme and marvelous portrayal of social issues, yet when it comes to the dilemma of LGBT community, it always turns a deaf ear for after all, homosexuality is a taboo. Usually writers deliberately skip or misrepresent homosexuality in order to avoid public wrath. A Case of Exploding Mangoes by Muhammad Hanif and The Quilt by Ismat Chughtai are just two examples of misrepresentation. It is critical to understand that homosexuality is not a choice or a consequent

action for mere absence of opposite sex; rather, it is natural. Pakistani society relies on the preconceived notions that having sexual relations with the same gender makes one queer. This mindset clearly tells us how much the LGBT community is being neglected and misunderstood. While ample evidences are available to prove that homosexuality is not an abnormality (as LBG T activists are of the view that homosexuality is completely natural which is also their core argument against the onslaught of society), yet the mainstream members of the society or straight people are not ready to buy this argument. They deem that homosexuality is nothing but contradictory to the natural course, hence it is liable to sheer antagonism. The principal purpose of this paper is to underline the plight of LGBT community through the lens of South Asian Literature besides highlighting the misconception that homosexuality is merely a substitute for the absence of opposite sex. The closet queers of our society seek identity and acceptance which needs a mammoth effort for realization.

Keywords: homosexual, taboo, survey, media.

When you see movies like *Boys Don't Cry* and *Tipping the Velvet*, a forbidden corner of your heart is stirred, but it is there, latently present and waiting to be tapped. It is only gradually that a change is imperceptibly creeping in the constitutions of various countries regarding the acceptance of homosexual phenomena in literature, media and ultimately in everyday life. Since our direct

concern is our country of origin, Pakistan, we will be focusing on how the forbidden faction of society fares here and whether it is a natural urge that we are suppressing in various individuals who are forced to live a life of double standards. Homosexuality is considered as one of the notorious taboos customary in today's Pakistan; in Islam, homosexuality is prohibited as well as a crime punishable by whipping, imprisonment and even death. Impoverished by both religion and culture, homosexuality is still an inseparable stigma of the people mostly living in Northern areas of the country as well as in *Seraiki* belt. This article aims to expose the marginalization of LGBT community, which according to Iftii Naseem—the first openly known Muslim gay writer of Pakistan—“is a minority within minority” (Khan 2011).

What does LGBT mean? Where did it come from? What is the status of Queers in today's Pakistan and how do society and Literature perceive homosexuality? These are few questions dominating the modern motifs therein, but firstly, in order to understand the paradoxical juncture i.e. homosexuality which still survives amid the clear lack of acceptance from society and its sacrilegious status, it is necessary to delineate the chronicle footing of homosexuality in this region, which was once known as the Subcontinent. LGBT is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, derived from the popular modern gay movements in 1960. Queer theory, an offshoot of feminism, is now fully developed into a school of criticism which now advocates for the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders equally, while initially it was meant to support lesbians only. Queer is the term which now embodies all people who are considered non-straight by normal or straight people due to their homosexual orientations. In various developed countries, queers now enjoy a certain level of freedom as they are not only given full rights along with protection

but also they are allowed to tie knots legally, while third world countries are quite reluctant to give any sort of space to queers.

Homosexuality had its unfathomable roots in this expanse before the advent of Islam, yet it is often associated with Muslim invaders and *Sufis* while some critics trace English Imperialists for the initiation of homosexuality, despite the fact that English intruders were responsible for the promotion of homophobia. India's exposure to Victorian morality under British rule induced a mass disapproval of subaltern sexual orientations. "Thus, for all practical purposes, homophobia was essentially a Western legacy in India" (Shetty 2015). On the other hand, Hasham in his article affirms:

All anyone has to do to discredit this line of thought is to look at the ways of lovemaking described in the *Kamasutra*, a text that predates Islam. When the Muslims came to this region, they too were already familiar with the concept of same sex attachments. *Sultan* Mehmud Ghazni who is often credited as being one of the first Muslim rulers to conquer parts of India was famously in love with his slave Ayaz. (Hasham 2015)

In 1860, Lord Macaulay had scathingly attacked same-sex sexual acts as "Unnatural Offences" in the Indian Penal Code. Section 377 of the Pakistan Penal Code carries the colonial legacy forward. Not only in Muslim countries, but in professedly secular countries like India, you have constitutional canons that condemn homosexual practices, as Geetanjali Misra reflects: "In criminalizing homosexual acts, section 377 has meant that those practising them have had to remain at the margins of society, their sexual preferences and activities kept secret from families, communities and the authorities, for fear of blackmail or prosecution" (2009: 21).

General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq with his rigidly extremist Hudood Ordinance furthered the downtrodden status of homosexual individuals. Imprisonment, stoning to death or the application of a hundred lashes were some of the punishments to check the rise of the supposedly aberrant behaviors. A false pillar of public morality had been erected. These heteronormative and patriarchal creations of canons systematically oppress marginalized communities. They become queers and deviants, intended never to be integrated into the mainstream. These so-called Queers are forced to develop a non-assimilationist politics to forge their own identity in rigid communities. The big question is whether the offence is really unnatural and transgressing, or one is actually biologically inclined towards specimens of the same sex. As Miranda Kennedy in her article confirms: "Homosexuals in Pakistan walk a fine line between harsh legal and cultural prohibition and some form of unspoken social acceptance" (2004). It is only in the urban areas of Pakistan that the LGBT community gets a faint hint of recognition.

Most of them choose to live in continual self-negation and self-denial due to the communal pressure or in order to safeguard their families' reputation, rightly pointed out by Sepoy: "Pakistani gays exist closeted, marked by secret signs and settings.... Silence becomes the primary medium. There are many lifelong bachelors and aunts in a society geared explicitly toward marriage and procreation" (2004).

Sub-continental literature is chock-full of instances of homosexuality; Urdu literature has never lagged behind in depicting the homosexual union and love. One of the forerunners of Urdu poetry, Hazrat Amir Khusrow (1253–1325 CE)—who was the mystic poet and scholar also known as "*Parrot of India*"—was

believed to be in profound love with his spiritual guru Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi. He voiced his desire and love for Nizamuddin in one of his Poems:

You've taken away my looks, my identity, by just a glance.
By making me drink the wine of love-potion,
I give my whole life to you Oh, *Nizam*
you've made me your bride, by just a glance. (Naim 126)

Khusrow was greatly fixated with the beauty of young boys of Delhi as he tipped his emotions for them in few of his verses:

Because of these pure Hindu boys.
Tied up in their locks,
Khusrow is like a dog with a collar. (Naim 138)

Mir Taqi Mir—one of the stalwarts of Urdu poetry—was also known for his penchant towards the same sex. His substantial part of poetry has been dedicated to young boys. Mir affirms:

These pert smooth-faced boys of the city,
What cruelty they inflict on young men. (Naim 156)

While in another couplet, he asserts:

If not him, there is his brother
Mir, are there any restrictions in love? (Naim 152)

In short, homoeroticism was not an alien concept to the people of the Subcontinent generally and to the poets particularly. It shows to what degree, a diverse and pluralistic culture this region had, in which sexual orientation and preferences had nothing to do with

being successful and useful members of a society. As Hasham rightly points out in his article, “The society was much more tolerant and accepting of homosexuals and in certain situations such associations were appreciated and celebrated” (2015).

Being a woman in a Pakistani society means, she has to be an epitome of obedience throughout her life, be it a daughter, mother or wife; life becomes hellish, if she is a lesbian. Like most of gays, a lesbian cannot dare to reveal her identity due to the patriarchal molding of society, alongside the homophobic nature driven by religious injunctions. The silencing of lesbians is more grave and severe than the gays, for the life of even a straight woman is miserable in most parts of the country, especially the remote and far-flung areas of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Interior Sindh and Southern Punjab. In these regions particularly and the whole country generally, women are mostly treated as a canvas to throw emotional and sexual baggage, so keeping the status-quo in mind, one can profess that lesbians have a very long journey to travel, contrary to their male counterparts, gays, who somehow manage to raise their voice for their empowerment and against the prejudiced societal norms and customs.

Neglected by mainstream media and abandoned by political powers, the LGBT community of Pakistan seems to take refuge under the cocoons of Literature, e.g. the pioneer gay poet Ifti Naseem who has written the award winning Urdu book *Narman*, which is considered as direct conversation of a Muslim gay with the society. Ifti’s work has inspired and given courage to the silenced queers of Pakistan, who have now started a movement named, PQM –Pakistan Queer Movement—which aims to work for the empowerment and emancipation of queers, as Modern Pakistani literature has always given a cold shoulder to the queer

community, by keeping them at arm's length from the literary horizon.

Female sexuality was never discussed openly in literature before Chughtai's *The Quilt*, for which she had to face trials and tribulations as well. The homoerotic affiliation of the protagonist Begum Jan with her maid Rabbu is treated as the main theme of the story. Chughtai treats homosexuality as an option and choice contrary to the fact that being a queer is genetic. These two writers will be the main focus of the paper, alongwith responses from real-life situations.

Ismat Chughtai, one of the forerunners of Urdu literature, was the most bold and controversial woman writer of the twentieth century. Recounting the anecdote of Begum Jaan in *The Quilt*—a translation of the original work titled as *Lihaf* written in 1942—Ismat Chughtai poses this question of gender discrimination. Chughtai's new woman is a symbol of rebellion against the hegemony of male sexual preferences. It is evident from the historical fact that Chughtai had to appear before the High Court due to the obscure content in her short story which she successfully defended and won; it shows the ultra-patriarchal molding of the society where mere by discussing the issue of female sexuality is considered a sin, let alone raising a voice for emancipation. The story of Begum Jaan is an account of a young girl who happened to live with Begum. The selection of a young girl as a narrator of the story itself tells that Chughtai was well-aware of the consequences and possible reaction from the society, due to which she carefully chose a child to narrate the saga which marvelously exposes the marginalization of female sexuality. Contrary to the popular notion that *The Quilt* highlights the issues of queers, it has done unconceivable damage to the cause. The story reflects that Begum

Jaan seeks sexual satisfaction from her maid not because she is a lesbian or she is attracted towards the same gender genetically; rather, it is due to the complete disfavor and lack of attention from her elderly husband; she is compelled to seek sexual favors and pleasures from her maid Rabbu, which gives the impression that her homoeroticism is nothing but a choice, because her husband's conjugal role must be supplanted. "Having married Begum Jaan, he tucked her away in the house with his other possessions and promptly forgot her. The frail, beautiful Begum wasted away in anguished loneliness" (Chughtai 36). The whole notion of homoeroticism is being challenged, reducing it to the level of opportunity and option.

The Quilt does not seem to stop its misrepresentation of queers as the case of Nawab Sahib, the husband of Begum Jaan, confirms this notion; Nawab Sahib is depicted as a gay who has a keen interest in young and beautiful boys:

He, however, had a strange hobby. Some people are crazy enough to cultivate interests like breeding pigeons and watching cockfights. Nawab Sahib had contempt for such disgusting sports. He kept an open house for students—young, fair and slender-waisted boys whose expenses were borne by him. (Chughtai 36)

Again, you see homoeroticism being conceived as a hobby rather than as a natural impulse.

The institution of marriage is a safe haven for most of the queers in order to avoid a walk of shame and eternal humiliation yet the consequences of such marriages are drastic and tragic. The failed married life of Begum Jaan rightly points out that such a marriage is a mismatch, where no healthy relationship can be

nourished and nurtured; rather, estrangement and regret keep haunting them for eternity. Behind the closet, queers exist, who unwillingly find asylum under the banner of marriage and are destined to carry this burden of guilt for the rest of their lives. According to a true story published in *The Express Tribune Blogs: My Husband is a Gay-A Difficult Truth*, a couple Sohail and Ifrah married happily for six years with a four-year old baby to complete their family until Ifrah found out that her husband was a gay. She discovered that her husband was involved in an intimate relation with a guy.

Her happy little world, the family she built over years, all fell apart. She thought of giving her husband a divorce, but her parents refused to support her decision, fearing disgrace and finding it hard to get good proposals for her unmarried sisters in the presence of a divorced daughter at home. (Hira 2015)

Ifrah is not alone who is facing such a situation; rather, each and every married queer, as to avoid humiliation and disgrace to their families, is weathering the same storm. Hira is just another 'straight' or 'normal' girl who found out that she was married to a gay: "Hira came back to her parent's house the same night and when she confronted her in-laws, they sheepishly replied that they thought he would be 'fine' once he got married to a girl" (Hira 2015).

The solution of being gay is to marry the individual to a girl, which as a result makes him 'straight', as the case of Hira exposes how people in our society think about queers. Queers' transsexual longings are seen as major threat to the family infrastructure of society. Meanwhile, in India a campaign named as "corrective rape" has been launched with the sole purpose, to cure

homosexuality, as they think homosexuality is a disease which can be cured by forcing the victim to rape someone; this mentality is not only found in India but also in Pakistani society where the majority consider homosexuality as a psychological disorder which can be treated by using various methods including religious practices like dua, (prayers) tawiz (amulet) etc. or by undergoing medical therapy. Deepthi Tadanki, an Indian LGBT activist spotted: "Family members forced a gay boy to have sex with his mother, in a bid to turn him 'straight'" (*Daily Pakistan Global* 2015). *The Independent* newspaper claims that the ongoing 'corrective rape' has given a golden chance to people (who consider homosexuality as a disease) to sexually harass queers in order to cure them; so far dozens of queers have been raped: "Among the victims was Mvuleni Fana, who was walking home from football practice when she was gang raped by four men who told her they would make her "a real woman" before beating her and leaving her for dead" (*The Independent* 2015).

Henceforth, writers like Ismat Chughtai faced public's wrath, mainly from religious groups who dragged her into court of law for she had dared to touch upon the issue of female sexuality. A 1996 Indian film *Fire*, which was loosely-based on Ismat's *The Quilt*, received a harsh public treatment, including attacks on cinemas, which later on led to the banning of the film. Bal Thackeray, the then Leader of the extremist Hindu political party, feeling the heat of the movie *Fire*, termed Lesbianism as a 'Social-AIDS' which might spread as an epidemic, engulfing the whole society and tradition (*New York Times* 1998). Those are the people who only want to see women in their assigned roles and anticipate that deviation from such a 'noble-path' would ultimately disturb the whole social fabric. Shabana Azmi— one of the protagonists in the movie *Fire*—comments:

What the women are doing basically is negotiating more space for themselves, what they are doing is trying to break out of the tradition that places them only as wife and mother, as the bearers of male's children and the fact that they are moving out of that and also claiming desire. My God if women start claiming desire, can you imagine how dreadful it would be for our culture? (*Fire: The Documentary* 1998).

On a surreptitious level, documentaries like *Poshida: Hidden LGBT Pakistan* explore gender identities, the impact of the US embassy's advocacy of gay rights, and social media accommodation of the suppressed gays in Pakistan. In an interview by *The Daily* taken from the filmmakers, the purpose was to "uncover the terrible abuses and injustices that happen to LGBT Pakistanis and to hopefully create dialogue and thinking".¹ The dismal situation and sordid state of the affairs profess that there is no silver-lining for Pakistani queers as society grows more and more intolerant with each passing day contrary to their Western fellows who are enjoying the perks of secular-democracy, as gay-marriage has been finally legalized in USA. In the wake of legalization of gay-marriage, Pakistani queers show support on internet and social sites, along with some civil society activists. Rabayl comments in her blog on Samaa TV, "Islam if read as a monolith, stuck in time and fixed in space, will not allow equal rights to homosexuals"². Internet and social media are acting as

¹ <http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/lifestyle/first-ever-movie-on-pakistans-hidden-lgbt-community-594/> "First Ever Movie on Pakistan's Hidden LGBT Community" *The Daily*. See Sources.

² "Is it Time for Gay Rights in Pakistan?" June 25, 2011,

the only hope for LGBT community by raising awareness among general masses through blogging and promoting it on Social sites.

Pakistani director Siraj-Ul-Haq, in order to test the patience and acceptance level of Pakistani society regarding LGBT community, recently depicted a homosexual scene in his famous serial *Humnasheen*, which was aired on *Hum TV*. This sparked a controversy over internet as well as on social sites. Upon asking a fellow student at my university that what is his opinion regarding the depiction of homosexual scene, he responded that Hum TV is crossing all set rules and regulations of our society: “It is immoral and un-Islamic” (Zia 2015).

The novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*—a satirical masterpiece by Muhammad Hanif—deals with the enigmatic demise of Pakistan’s “Mard-e-Momin” General Zia-Ul-Haq, whose plane had blown in the air just after taking off. In a sub-plot of the novel, Ali Shigri, the protagonist, is involved in an intimate relationship with his friend Obaid, who also happens to be his roommate, as both are cadets at Pakistan Air Force Academy. Hanif’s treatment of homosexuality, as a sub-plot, shows that Modern literature still is not ready to give space to the silenced LGBT community. This is one of the novels of the region along with Khaled Hosseini’s *And the Mountains Echoed* which somehow explicitly depict the genuine woes of gays. Khaled Hosseini explores a subplot of homoeroticism between Mr. Wahdati and his servant Nabi. Usually, writers deliberately skip or misrepresent homosexuality in order to avoid public wrath, for

homosexuality is against the constructed norms and traditions of our society.

In the prologue of the novel, Hanif uses the word “homosexual” to describe the physical appearance of the American Ambassador. “Arnold Ralph, whose shiny bald head and carefully groomed moustache give him the air of a respectable homosexual businessman from small-town America” (Hanif 1). Stereotypes are often called as the false shadows of reality and truth; Muhammad Hanif also seems intoxicated by stereotypes and categorizes people on the basis of sheer discrimination at some instances. How does a homosexual look? Does he/she have any special looks? What are the set rules to define and judge a queer by his/her appearance? Hanif is not the only one who mocks homosexuals; rather, it is a routine handling and a well-established societal habit. Later on, Hanif’s protagonist also pictures Brannon—the drill instructor at Pakistan Air Force Academy—as a gay, hence it seems, every white male is perceived as a gay associated with the stereotype of fairness... an obsession of most females in the sub-continent. The word ‘gay’ is more like a derogatory insult and people who dare to deviate from the established course are often awarded with such terms. Hani Taha in her article confirms: “Whether or not these men are actually homosexual is irrelevant and, in some circles, displaying emotion or sensitivity is enough to be labeled ‘gay’ or a ‘fag’” (2011).

Chapter Seventeen of the novel contains a vivid depiction of homoerotic intimacy between Ali Shigri and his friend, Obaid. Muhammad Hanif is indeed a pioneer in this regard: “I breathed in the smell of jasmine oil from his hair and sank back into the mattress ...His lips travelled along the outline of my jaw, his

fingertips made tiny, airy circles on the tip of my cock..." (Hanif 164).

Obaid probably realized the gravity of the situation; therefore, he insisted upon not leaving any sort of traces. It is not difficult to anticipate what might happen if they were caught red-handed as various precedents are available to tell us what happened to those who were caught during action; according to a report, 'Pakistan: Homosexuals and Homosexuality', by Landinfo—an Independent body that collects and analyses information on current human rights situations and issues in foreign countries:

The World Organization Against Torture (WOAT) is targeting Pakistan over the recent whipping of two males allegedly caught having sex in a public lavatory. Mohammad Zaman, 38, a mosque worker, and Fahimullah, a 14-year-old student, were lashed publicly May 17 in Bara Bazar in Pakistan's western Khyber Agency, an area administered by local Afridi tribespeople. (2007)

Perhaps, Hanif was aware of what Oscar Wilde said: "If you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh; otherwise they will kill you" (Wilde 12). Ismat, in her short story, has discussed the issue of homosexuality clandestinely, which requires an expert reader to trace out the meaning hidden between the lines, yet she was trialed and humiliated publicly. Another aspect worth pondering is the fact that *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* is written in English while Ismat Chughtai's *The Quilt* was originally written in Urdu entitled as *Lihaf*; hence, due to the limited readership of Pakistani English Literature Hanif's novel has not attracted the expected attention of the public. Secondly, English is considered as a language of the elite class; therefore, there is a remote possibility that they have developed a certain level of acceptance regarding

LGBT community due to the Western factor i.e. homosexuality is an officially celebrated phenomenon in almost all advanced societies, as elite class in our country generally copycats their Western peers. Summarizing the whole discussion, a report in *Weekly Pulse* confirms, "Homosexuality has never been a topic to debate in Pakistan, neither in media nor in public forums. A very few articles have been published on this issue, only in a few English language magazines, which have hardly a two percent readership all over the country" (Report 2011).

The lack of awareness regarding the true identity of queers is the most important reason which breeds hatred and antagonism among people. The nature of homosexuality, in Pakistan, is totally different as most of the registered homosexual cases indicate that they are direct repercussions of sexual frustration. In a society where male and female genders are segregated through powerful cultural restrictions and religious injunctions, homosexuality becomes the only possible solution to satisfy one's innate sexual preferences. Boarding institutions, Army camps and boys hostels are nurseries of homosexuality in Pakistan, just like the protagonist, Ali Shigri and his friend Obaid, in the novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, are involved in a homosexual relationship as they are sharing the same room at Pakistan Air Force Academy, where generally all cadets belong to the same gender. Hence, it also confirms the above-mentioned statement that homosexuality in Pakistan has nothing much to do with one's sexual preferences i.e. one does not necessarily need to be naturally a gay in order to get involved in a homosexual relationship. My personal experiences also confirm this paradoxical phenomenon, as I myself spent five years in a boarding institution, during which I observed many homosexual incidents among students. Some of my friends were also engaged in homosexual activities contrary to the fact that

all of them were 'straight' and 'normal' i.e. heterosexual yet due to unavailability of opposite gender, they tended to seek sexual pleasure from the same gender. Ironically, all those who were involved in homosexual intimacy would equivocally denounce and malign LGBT community. They also became hypocritically furious when labeled as gay, for they simply hated being addressed with a socially tabooed term.

In Chapter Eighteen, Hanif has painstakingly discussed the hardcore issue which almost every LGBT community member faces each day, as it depicts how our society treats a queer, for generally queers are considered sub-human. As a result sexual abuse, hate crimes and discrimination are an integral plight of a person who dares to declare himself or herself as a gay/lesbian, as displayed in the novel:

He tries to move the blindfold above my eyes and his fingers linger on my cheeks more than they push the cloth...then he puts his teeth on the knot and I can feel his slobbering lips at the back of my neck, inches below where he should be directing his efforts. He comes closer and I can feel his cock poking my shoulder. (Hanif 174)

The manner in which the soldier has tried to take advantage of a blindfolded queer, Ali Shigri, actually epitomizes our social mentality and routine handling of queers, as everyone in our society believes that the existence of queers brings a disgrace to our mighty culture; moreover, they are indeed termites in our social fabric. Therefore, they must be exterminated accordingly. Our society, literature, culture and religion are homophobic in nature; therefore, the marginalization will not cease at least in the near future. The only bright aspect or silver-lining for LGBT community in Pakistan is the foundation of PQM—Pakistan Queer

Movement—a non-political body, whose aim is to emancipate and empower queers in Pakistan. The founding member, Nuwas Manto, an LGBT activist stationed in Lahore, is very optimistic and confident regarding the future of his community. In an article, “Let’s Get This Straight. I Am Not”, published in *The Express Tribune*, he says: “You won’t see us marching in pink underwear, for instance. What we are working towards is something like the Progressive Writers’ Movement who aspire to bring about a mental state of change through writing” (Taha 2011). The inception was not promising as Pakistan’s first gay website *Queerpk.com* was intolerantly shut down by *Pakistan Telecommunication Authority* (PTA). The website’s motto was “Don’t hate us, Know us”, primarily an effort to bridge the gap of misconception widespread in our society, regarding the identity and nature of LGBT community, which was hammered down in time by Pakistani Government in order to ensure and safeguard purity in our society. Amna Iqbal in her article, “‘Don’t hate us, know us’, but PTA disagrees: Pakistan’s First Gay Website Banned”, brilliantly explains: “After all, they had to keep the pristine white purity of the land intact, and this website was just a tad too colorful. So the PTA did what it does best, shoved it under the carpet like it didn’t exist and brought back their golden silence” (Iqbal 2013).

The escalating religious fundamentalism has further increased the tempo of marginalization. Hence, queers in Pakistan would not be able to clutch their rights, unless and until Pakistan becomes a secular state which by far seems next to impossible as the foundation of Pakistan is laid on Islamic ideology. Secondly, the hypocritical attitude of Pakistani society on the issue of homosexuality is also one of the contributing factors in the unending practice of relegation. Instead of discussing the naked reality that homosexuals are part of society and admitting the fact

that homosexuality is rampant across the country, our society hides itself under the sheets of denial, while most of the time debating over the nature of homosexuality whether it is natural or unnatural. The absolute notion from a large section of society that homosexuality is an abnormal human activity and it can be cured, has destroyed the very idea of community and identity, as it implies that queers are not a community, rather a bunch of people suffering from psychological disorder.

Pakistani society is one of the most sexually frustrated societies, where thousands of pedophilic cases are being registered each year from seminaries of the tribal belt and the province of KPK which are generally known for their strict religious temperament. The prime reason behind this paradoxical pattern is the fact that gender segregation to an extreme level is imbued in their society, powered by centuries-long traditional values and divine restrictions. Hence, homosexuality prevails in these expanses mainly due to the scarcity of opposite gender, as women are mostly confined to the four walls, which makes homosexuality a matter of choice, as people bluntly refuse to confess that they are queer which makes matters worse for genuine queers, as they suffer from severe identity crises for they are attracted to the same gender due to genetic and innate impulses. The only solution possible is to un-taboo homosexuality, and discuss it openly, by giving fair space to queers as to present their case, so that the mist of confusion could settle down, providing queers the lost sense of community.

In pursuit of firsthand and genuine experience and realization, I interviewed a gay, who on the condition of complete anonymity, agreed to share his excruciating anecdote. He said:

It is not an option or choice, I was born that way. From my childhood till today I am attracted towards the same gender only. I never felt any infatuation towards the opposite gender. I like to hang out with guys. It gives me real pleasure and satisfaction.

Upon asking how his family and relatives treat him, he added:

When I realized that I am a gay, I told one of my friends; soon it spread like wild fire throughout my school; I became a laughing stock overnight. Everybody cracked jokes on my expense irrespective of gender. Girls used to tell me that I am not a man since I am a gay; therefore, I didn't have any maleness in me. Life became unbearable for me; soon my parents got the news and first my mom scolded me followed by harsh physical punishment from my dad without even asking anything. I had no idea what wrong I had done. My parents never treated me like they used to treat me before; I was like an unwanted child. That night I cried for hours. I could not understand why they were so furious; it was not my fault that I was born that way; to be honest, I simply cannot help myself. My parents did whatever they could do to stop me;Well, what can I say! I was a married man at the age of 18!

I asked, "So did marriage change anything?" He smirked for a while and then responded:

Believe me! It was like a prison. I could not feel any attraction towards my wife; I felt that I was being imprisoned in my own body. Things between me and my partner went from bad to worse. I sometimes feel sorry for her, as I badly messed up her life as well but what can I do?

It is not in my control; like I said, I cannot help myself.
(Anonymous 2015)

Certainly, this is not a unique story; rather, it is a story which many queers in Pakistan share. May be the others would never get a chance to tell their story, as our society has no patience for hearing such nonsense.

We have family-oriented social structure while the Western societies are mainly individual-based; hence no matter how secular we become, homosexuals won't be able to breathe freely. Complete emancipation and empowerment seem next to impossible for there is no active participation from LGBT community, not because they are not interested but because the fear of being persecuted stunts their identities. A positive development though has been observed recently which gives some hope to the marginalized-queers, as various writers like Kamila Shamsie (*Broken Verses*) and Ali Sethi (*The Wish Maker*) have taken pen and started raising voice for LGBT rights alongside subtly highlighting the plight of their community. Internet and social forums are proved to be blessings for queers as they are successfully campaigning for their rights. They also have gained some support from the liberal section of our society, breaking their forced-silence. LGBT community should be treated fairly like any other irrespective of the moral and immoral debate for whether we like it or not, they do exist in our society, so instead of living in the state of denial, this issue must not only be discussed; it should be addressed.

The South Asian society, where kindergarten jingles are fed to breed undeveloped minds, depicts the imbalance of a culture in which men and women have been ghettoized. It lays the foundation of the patriarchal attitude which is hitherto the prime

source of inspiration for fortifying discrimination against women. It is the gender based discrepancy which has categorized men and women into masculine and feminine (i.e. gender). Sex is natural, unlike gender which is a socio-cultural artifact and man-made. So male is measured as a symbol of power and authority while the female is restrained to the lyrics as attractive, beautiful and delicate. The idea of gender is responsible for the division of human beings into sex-difference which then lays the foundation of restriction on women, making them subordinate, voiceless and mere objects in possession.

Ample evidences are available to prove that homosexuality is not an abnormality; according to a research published in U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland, a specific stretch of the X chromosome called Xq28 holds a gene or genes that predispose a man to being gay (New Science Magazine 2014). Hence, it sparks the debate of Nature or Nurture i.e. whether homosexuality is natural or unnatural, though LBGT activists are of the view that homosexuality is completely natural which is also their core argument against the onslaught of society; an article, "Nature vs Nurture: Is Homosexuality a Choice?" submitted by Naz from Pakistan claims:

Different animal species use same sex behavior to satisfy all sorts of needs like pleasure, pair bonding, looking after the young, and social advancement...One research study conducted last year with 409 pairs of gay brothers found that homosexuality was more common amongst brothers, showing that sexual orientation is not a choice but that people are born gay or straight. (Laaltain 2015)

The question whether homosexuality should be entertained as natural or despised as unnatural only yields futile debate, as why

we need some biological evidences in the first place to prove that homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality. Our constitution provides protection as well as allows freedom of speech to everyone, including Muslims, Hindus and Christians without any biological confirmation whether they have a Muslim-gene or a Hindu-gene for we don't need any proof to show respect to one's preferences and choices, so why should we judge LGBT community for their preferences and why should we discriminate against them for their choice of life, despite the fact that their preferences are innate and genetic.

If Sigmund Freud took the phallus as not only a sexual, but a social power symbol while males who change their sex are to be taken as castrated or disempowered males, the hollowness of psychoanalytical concepts cannot be denied. Carefully choreographed social performances weaken the true identity of a person. Being victims of easily buying into the black and white world's market of male and female dichotomy, we become perpetrators of such incidents where transgender Alisha is shot dead eight times by an offended customer and who can't get a patient's worth in Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital because her sexual orientation becomes her worst enemy. Farzana Jan, President of the KP Shemale Association reported to *The Dawn* on 26th May, 2016, "They won't let us treat our patients or even grieve for our dead at the hospital". Such an instance of humanity puts animals to shame. Such dichotomies are futuristic manipulative designs for society to evade mortality. Alternatively, Literature can be the territory for mapping such conflicts, stirring important questions, and leading towards a pragmatic reform in society through a slow but sure march towards a new horizon. Literature provides the dream, and reformers become the architects of an improved, if not a perfect, outlook on tolerance.

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Film as an Agent of a Major Paradigm Shift: A Case Study

Neelam Jabeen

Abstract

This paper is a rhetorical analysis of an Indian 'Bollywood' film PK (2014). The idea of cultural diversity and "unity in diversity" has been a motif of Indian nationhood (Mishra 140). The diversity in a country, however, can be problematic in many ways. Besides general conflicts among groups based on religion, caste or language that disturb the peace of the society, there are other factors too that are immensely affected by the cultural diversity, and that in turn affect the diversity. Moreover, the open market that allows import and export of goods cannot afford a diverse cultural society as it is hard to cater to the needs and demands of a diverse society as compared to a monolithic society where needs and demands are also as homogeneous as people. Politically too, it is harder to manage a diverse society as compared to managing an insular society. All these factors lead toward a paradigm shift—from diversity to post-diversity and multiculturalism. Media, especially film has an important role in reflecting and bringing about this shift. The paper studies how the film deconstructs certain binaries that in turn challenge the very concept of diversity. The paper provides a textual analysis of the film to see how the

film reflects the 'paradigm shift' by deconstructing the binaries—majority/minority, Hindu/Muslim (and minority religions), Indian/Pakistani, human/alien, local/foreign, earthly/extraterrestrial, place/space, standard/vernacular, dominant/non-dominant, and family/individual. The paper is divided into four sections. It first sheds light on Indian cinema, Bollywood in particular; then it gives a detailed account of the reception of the film PK. The third section is the close textual analysis of the film and the final section concludes the paper and discusses the significance of the study.

Keywords: PK, paradigm shift, binaries, diversity, culture, multiculturalism, post-diversity, Bollywood.

The idea of cultural diversity and “unity in diversity” has been a motif of Indian nationhood (Mishra 140). When I use the word ‘culture’ in this context, it means *culture* in the true sense of the word—“the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts” (Zimmerman). When we generally talk about a multicultural or a diverse society, we imagine cosmopolitan countries like the U.S.A where people from all over the world come to seek work, get education and so on. So as a result, the U.S.A is considered a culturally diverse country. India on the other hand is “multicultural within the country” (Mishra and Devarakonda 284). Different states of India have different languages, castes and religions that make it a truly culturally diverse country.

India is also a land of believers so religion can well be used as a dominant factor that may define each culture. With Hinduism being the religion of the majority—80% of the population, Islam is also the religion of 13% of the population. Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism make other religious minorities (“Religion”). Religion has a pivotal role in India—to create as well as eliminate discrimination, to highlight the diversity, and to unite some and alienate others. So every religious group, may it be the majority or minority represents somewhat a unique culture.

The diversity in a country, however, can be problematic in many ways. Besides general conflicts among groups based on religion, caste or language that disturb the peace of the society, there are other factors too that are immensely affected by the cultural diversity, and that in turn affect the diversity. Naveen Mishra, while particularly referring to India contends: “the era of liberalization in the 90s and globalization in the 21st century gushed in the market forces which altered the very nature and idea of diversity, more specifically cultural diversity” (140). So in this particular context, economy is a big factor. The open market that allows import and export of goods cannot afford a diverse cultural society as it is hard to cater to the needs and demands of a diverse society as compared to a monolithic society where needs and demands are also as homogenous as people.

There is yet another factor that has its share of affecting and being affected by the cultural diversity—politics. Mishra and Devarakonda in their *Transition from Cultural Diversity to Multiculturalism: Perspectives from Offshore Industry in India* while defining multiculturalism state: “Multiculturalism is a body of thought in political philosophy which propagates the ways to respond to cultural and religious diversity...it describes a set of

policies, the aim of which is to manage and institutionalize needs and rights to shape public policy” (284). So quite understandably, it is harder to manage a diverse society as compared to managing an insular society. Mishra and Devarakonda, however, differentiate between diversity and multiculturalism. For them, diversity is the acknowledgement of “the existence of ‘many’ that are different, heterogeneous and are not commensurable” (284) ; multiculturalism, on the other hand, endorses the diversity but also seeks the ways to manage a diverse society. Like N. Mishra, Mishra and Devarakonda also relate the idea of cultural diversity and multiculturalism to liberalization and globalization of the Indian market: “As India is a multi-ethnic, multi-caste, multi-religious country, the inclusive [economic] growth demands all social groups get equal access to services and opportunities for economic and social development” (285). Synthesizing the arguments of N. Mishra and, Mishra and Devarakonda, it is derived that liberalization and globalization are the factors that are causing a shift from diverse society in India to a “post-diverse society” as N. Mishra would believe, and to a multicultural society as Mishra and Devarakonda would contend.

When we talk about the role of market in the paradigm shift—from diversity to post-diversity or multiculturalism, it will not be out of place to consider the role of media in this shift. In fact, N. Mishra discusses market and media together, as both are profit driven, to see how cultural diversity is a misfit in the corporate logic. My paper is a rhetorical analysis of an Indian ‘Bollywood’ film *PK* (2014). The paper studies how the film deconstructs certain binaries that in turn challenge the very concept of diversity. The paper provides a close textual analysis of the film to see how the film reflects the paradigm shift that N. Mishra and Mishra and Devarakonda refer to. The paper is divided into four

sections. It first sheds some light on Indian cinema, Bollywood in particular; then, it gives a detailed account of the reception of the film *PK*. The third section is the close textual analysis of the film and in the final section the paper discusses the significance of the study.

Indian Cinema

Before we get into discussing the role of the Indian cinema in the globalization process, we need to clarify what we are exactly referring to when we say Indian cinema. There is not one 'national cinema' in India but multiple 'national cinemas' because there are distinct cinemas like Hindi, Tamil, Bengali etc. Hindi cinema, however, is dominant and is also referred to as 'Bollywood' (Gooptu 767-68). With liberalization and globalization, Bollywood has also taken a shift. There has been a gradual movement from typically family-centered love stories to more socially concerned idea-oriented films. This shift also shows a move away from highlighting diversity. Where once, there was no concept of a Hindu-Muslim love affair, now there are many Bollywood films where the religious difference has been ignored, *Veer Zara* being one example. *Veer Zara* not only showed the love affair but also portrayed how hard it was for the couple to get united (as they could not unite in Veer's lifetime, Zara however crossed Pakistan to live where Veer lived when alive), as society wouldn't approve of this. This particular film also deconstructed the idea of territories and boundaries and religious differences that create the rift between people since the hero of the film is an Indian Sikh and the heroine is a Pakistani Muslim. So it can be seen in the light of globalization as a realm where the idea of place/space is contested. The fact cannot be ignored that *Veer Zara* is produced by Yash Chopra who believes that "in India, a filmmaker cannot ignore the

elements of Indian culture which are rooted in religion and family values” (qtd. in Rachel Dwyer in *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* 157). In this particular film, however, religious values are put at stake.

Film, being an ambassador of a culture/country, also has a role—to represent the country to the world. Bollywood has a wide viewership throughout the globe that does not necessarily comprise of non-resident Indians. Indian Hindi films are watched and appreciated in the Anglophone world from the 1930s onward and are enjoyed for their “mixture of action, eroticism and sentimentality” (Athique 299). However, this typical ‘masala’ of action, eroticism and sentimentality also is taking a subservient position under the current demands of globalization. Ironically enough, many of the recent Indian films are gaining more popularity outside India, whereas Indians themselves are dissatisfied with the films’ presentations. Academy Award winner *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) is one such example that disappointed Indian viewers for its lack of “affective aesthetics of Bollywood cinema” and for “reinforce[ing] unacknowledged stereotype of India as a former colony, still developing nation, struggling for survival and not yet ready to assume First World status” (O’Neill 255). So Bollywood has the task of catering to the home audience as well as to the transnational audience that at times clash with each other.

PK’s Reception

PK (2014) is yet another example that has gained worldwide appreciation but put up with severe backlash from the Hindu majority in India. *PK* is not only attacking the religious diversity in India but is also presenting other globalization themes.

There are numerous binaries that *PK* seems to dismantle—majority/minority, Hindu/Muslim (and minority religions), Indian/Pakistani, human/alien, local/foreign, earthly/extraterrestrial, place/space, standard/vernacular, dominant/non-dominant, and family/individual.

Rhetorically, *PK* can be understood as a reaction/response to two different exigencies. On the one hand is the demand of global cultural homogeneity where diversity might not find any place. The “borderless world” allows all cultures to come together and engage in “mutual tension and series of negotiations leading to harmonic (not always though) transformations and adaptations” (Mishra 144). So *PK*, while clearly dismantling the binaries aforementioned, presents a borderless world.

The second exigency, on the other hand, is the current tension between religions creating worldwide disturbance. Hindu Muslim/conflicts in India, Islamophobia in the West, and the ISIS crisis, to name a few, create a context ‘ripe’ enough for the films like *PK*. Vikas Pandey, a BBC journalist, has also shed some light on the context of *PK* in his article “Why is Bollywood film *PK* controversial?": “It has come at a time when issues like religious conversion are being debated in parliament and prominent gurus have been arrested on charges like murder and rape.”

He further contends that *PK* is not the only film that has brought such a critical issue to the cinema. There have been other films in the past that have critiqued religious practices but the reason behind strong reaction against *PK* is that the movie does not resolve the questions it raises. Pandey also considers the lead actor Aamir Khan to be another reason for the film to attract more attention and reaction.

PK seems to bring to limelight the fact that the phenomenon called 'religion' is a social construct that divides human beings. However, it does recognize the 'constraint' that India after all is a land of believers so it does not seem to advocate a godless society. On the contrary, it presents the fact that there is one God who has created all but the idea of multiple religions is contestable. Indian film critic Taran Adarsh compares *PK* with *OMG Oh My God* that dealt with layman asking questions about God and God himself coming down to earth. *PK* according to Adarsh "differs with an alien not directly questioning God, but instead questioning the belief system that humans have created to reach God." Likewise, social anthropologist Srijana Mitra Das in her critical review of *PK* states:

PK is as much a philosophy as a film. It takes the 'stranded alien' theme, familiar from classics like *ET*, but tells the tale equally from the lonely alien's eyes - at times, evoking the beautiful story *The Little Prince* - as from his human narrator's. Starting with the alien's desperation, *PK* captures the fears and falsehoods humans weave around faith. When *PK* decides to pray for his remote, he's bewildered about whom to and how to pray.

For an international audience, especially from the west, *PK*'s satire on religion is light-hearted and more humorous than serious as Rachel Saltz from the *New York Times* in her article "Appealing to God, a Disoriented Space Alien Hopes There's Help Out There" observes: "And this sweet, ambling comedy about an innocent abroad — an alien who touches down in the Rajasthan desert — doesn't offend, even as it pokes gentle fun at religious differences and hypocrisy." Martin Tsai from *Los Angeles Times*, however, seems to get the seriousness of the matter as he states: "biting,

whip-smart satire on the thorny subject of organized religion, the Bollywood musical "PK" enlightens and provokes thorough outrageous slapstick."

In India, *PK* started controversy even before its release. The film poster showing almost nude main character, nominated as one of "the most controversial posters of Bollywood" by *Times of India*, stirred the debate that continues till date. However, audience's reaction to *PK* has been diverse:

PK, a hugely successful yet controversial film, is turning out to be the strangest phenomenon to emerge from a Bollywood studio. Even as Hindu leaders call for a ban on the film, it has grossed more than 4.82bn rupees (£49.1m) worldwide in its first two weeks, making it the second most successful Bollywood film of all time. (Rahman)

After a few days of the release, an angry mob burnt effigies of the director Hirani and the lead actor Khan and tore and burnt the posters of the film (Prisco). The major allegation against *PK* and its team is that it is anti-Hinduism. Even though the film seems to mock religious practices of many religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism, the Hindu religious groups see it as an attack on Hinduism only. *IBNLive* reported yoga guru Ramdev saying:

Before speaking anything against Christianity and Islam, people think twice but when it comes to Hinduism, anyone can speak anything against it. It is very unfortunate. These people and films should be boycotted. (CNN-IBN)

BJP (Bharati Janta Party) leader Subramanian Swami also questioned, in a tweet, the film's funding while considering it to be

a conspiracy against India and Hinduism by ISI (Inter services Intelligence, Pakistan) and Dubai (Zee Media Bureau). The reason for this type of reaction can be traced back to two important factors of the film. 1) An Indian Muslim actor Aamir Khan plays the lead role ("Aamir Khan Starrer") ; 2) a Pakistani Muslim character is shown to be very loyal and honest in the film. Some have related these two reasons to film's success in Pakistan. Bengali writer and feminist Taslima Nasreen, however, has appreciated Indian government for allowing such films to be released: "If PK was made in B'desh or Pakistan, producer, director and actor Aamir Khan would have been killed or in prison by now. Good that it's in India!" (qtd. in IndiaTV News Desk).

PK's writer and director Hirani and lead actor Aamir Khan have been clarifying their position since the release of the film. Indian film critic Subhash K. Jha also finds *PK* as a relief where "Raj Kumar Hirani makes us feel good about life. And that, in these troubled times, is not short of a miracle." Hirani has expressed his views in great detail:

Our film is inspired by the ideas of Sant Kabir and Mahatma Gandhi. It is a film that brings to fore the idea that all humans who inhabit this planet are the same. There are no differences. In fact, I have the highest respect for the concept of 'Advait'—the oneness of all humans—that is central to Indian culture, thought and religion. It saddens me to think that a film that upholds this great Hindu principle is accused of being disrespectful of Hinduism. I would like to thank the millions of deeply religious people who loved the film and expressed their feeling that the film, in fact, upholds the spirit of true religiosity and condemns only abuse of it. I believe in the great Hindu idea—

‘Vasudhalwa kutumbakam’—the whole world is a family. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and indeed all religions teach us brotherhood and love. The intent of the film is to uphold this great thought. (qtd. in *Express News Service*)

This speech is clearly intended for the audience who condemned the film for being anti-Hinduism and Hirani has counter attacked them by calling the film based on Hindu principles. Hirani must have foreseen the diverse reactions of the audience because the fictitious audience of *PK* also reacted in a more or less similar fashion.

Textual Analysis

Considering the reaction of some of the audience that *PK* has received, it appears that the central theme of *PK* is religion. A close textual study, however, reveals some other underlying motifs too. There is a consistent deconstruction of various binaries that permeate our everyday life and this study tries to show how the act of dismantling these binaries relates to the demands of globalization where diversity is a misfit. As already mentioned, media is profit driven and to fit the demands of a globalized world and to gain maximum viewership, media has to create an audience that is homogenous.

PK starts with the voice of a narrator who seems to be telling a story to some audience; at the end, it is revealed, however, that it was the central female character Jaggi who was reading from her memoir named *PK* to an adult audience. She starts with the attention grabbing technique of asking a rhetorical question of whether they (her audience) have wondered how many stars, planets and galaxies are there in the universe and that there might

be a planet where people like us inhabit. With the background voice of the narrator, after some aerial view of the Earth, a spaceship is shown to be descending from where appears a male humanlike figure stark naked, with a sparkling pendant that we later get to know is his remote control to call his spaceship back. So, in the very first scene, human/alien and terrestrial/extraterrestrial binaries are challenged. A binary typically refers to the phenomenon where existence of one means the absence of other like day and night, but by showing an alien coming to earth from his planet clearly deconstructs the binary. The place where the alien lands is a desert like place and the audience is intimated that this is a place called Rajasthan in India. Just a few minutes after landing, the alien loses his remote control as a passerby steals it from him considering it a valuable jewel. The next scene is set in Bruges, Belgium where the central female character is introduced. She meets a Pakistani Muslim character there and they fall in love with each other in their first meeting. Four more binaries are deconstructed in this scene—East/West, Hindu/Muslim, Indian/Pakistani, and marital/extramartial. The scene in Belgium is populated with Eastern characters. The setting is outside a theatre where famous Indian superstar Amitabh Bachan is to recite the poetry written by his father. Jaggu meets Sarfaraz, a Pakistani Muslim character who is a student there and works in Pakistani embassy. Hindu/Muslim and India/Pakistan rivalry is a well-known phenomenon but the friendship and the love affair between the two dismantle these binaries. Jaggu does show some resistance when she gets to know that Sarfaraz is a Muslim from Pakistan but he sings a song persuading her to forget the difference while getting along for a short while. During the song, they fall in love and there is a clear suggestion of an extramarital affair, which actually is a taboo in both Indian and

Pakistani cultures and religions. All this happens in the first fifteen minutes of the film.

From marketing point of view, in the first fifteen minutes, the film ensures its viewers that this is not a typical Indian audience based film. It has a global audience. The film does not even restrict age or gender of its audience. It is a comedy and involves no sexual content that would restrict it to an adult audience.

Up until recently, Indian film has been rooted in the motif of religious devotion. Rachel Dwyer in her chapter "Hinduism" in *Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (2011) states: "India remains a deeply religious country...In Indian cinema, religion is not just represented directly by divine presence or by religious communities, but also manifested in ways of creating an ideal world through the individual, family and society" (142).

So religion being part of everyday life is manifest in most of the films. *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001), a mega hit film, for example, primarily focuses on the family tradition and the nostalgia that one has for being an expatriate but it is permeated with a sense of Hindu lifestyle. *PK*, on the other hand, does introduce religion but from a different perspective. It, in fact, represents other minority religions too besides Hinduism but the focus this time is not to cherish religiosity and religious lifestyle but to dismantle the religious difference and diversity.

Hinduism is introduced in the third scene of the film where the audience immediately gets the sense of how unimportant it is for Jaggu. She is seen mocking the religious leader Tapaswi Ji that her parents so devoutly follow. So *PK* clearly shows a shift from

typical Hindu lifestyle to secular values, as religion is shown to be creating difference that the protagonist rejects. Dwyer, in the same chapter, notes that secularism in India has a different definition than that in the West. In India, "secularism means respecting all religions equally" (142). *PK*, however, seems to mock all religions equally, and perhaps Hinduism, the religion of the majority the most.

With all the binaries introduced and challenged in the first few minutes of the film, the rest of the film focuses on the religious practices of different groups of the society. *PK*, the alien, takes the central position here. He, being an alien and asking questions about religion, is a rhetorical choice on the part of the filmmaker. An alien is an outsider who does not belong to any of the regions or religions. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, religion is one of the defining characteristics of different social groups in India so attacking the religious diversity could also mean attacking the national diversity in general. This can also be considered a rhetorical tactic on the part of the filmmaker. Religious difference divides people. When the same dividing force is used to eradicate the difference, it is more powerful. One of the most important questions that *PK* asks in the film is: where is the religious stamp that God sent you with and how is it to be identified as a Hindu or a Muslim or any other prerogative? *PK* does not question the existence of God. He exclaims that the inhabitants of the Earth have found their creator but later when he observes the practices, he concludes that the people worship the God that they themselves made and not the one who made them. He bluntly calls the religion a business where the "managers" of religion make a little investment and garner a huge profit.

The questions that *PK* raises about religion highlight the

fact that current religious practices are not defined by God but constructed by the society. The social construction of religion in this film is explained through numerous accompanying examples that also shed light on every human act as socially constructed. The examples that PK provides are very simple and basic and therein lies the strength of the argument. His very simple question of which God should he worship since he is an alien and not born with a religion is very effective. He lands on Earth as an astronaut to do some research but he spends his entire time finding his remote control that gets stolen in the first scene. His quest for the remote control is analogous to his quest for God. Finding himself in a religious society, he is advised to seek help from God to find his remote control. Before his quest for the remote, he has to find God. He goes to the Hindu Temple, a Muslim Shrine, and a church but finds that in each of these places there is a different god. The very philosophic idea of the oneness of the creator is represented through his quest. He realizes that there are “managers” of each religion who hinder the direct relationship between man and God. These “managers” are the ones who get profit from the business of religion that they establish. To reinforce the idea of social construction of religion, there are some very petty examples too that create humor in the film. When Jaggu shows her surprise on the protagonist telling her that in their planet they don't wear any clothes, he explains with an example. He points to a crow sitting on a branch and he asks her if it is surprising or odd that the crow is naked, and then he asks how it would look if it wore a tie and a suit. So this little funny example shows that there is nothing natural about what humans do.

As already mentioned, market and politics are the factors that are affected by and in turn affect the diversity of a society. Film being a commercial medium has to consider both these

factors. Dwyer notes:


Given that Indian society values religiosity highly, filmmakers often wish to be seen as overtly religious at some times, whereas historically there have been times which may encourage other views such as secularism and religious tolerance. However great the religious feelings of individuals who have made these films, they are operating under constraints of the form, including narratives, images and language, and by the commercial needs of producers and financiers. There are also political constraints, notably censorship which restricts the depiction of taboo practices and images of minorities. (143)

Dwyer's observation holds true to *PK* as it also has to consider the commercial and political constraints. Commercially, *PK* has turned out to be a success as it has gained large viewership because of its themes and motifs. The very act of dismantling the binaries and challenging the diversity has created a "similarisation" (Mishra 140) of the audience that is a consumer of this product. The political constraints namely the censorship board that would restrict the depiction of "taboo practices" in the film however approved the film, which certainly means that the once "taboo practices" are no more considered as taboo by the policy makers. A film, being the ambassador of the country to the rest of the world while presenting an image of a society that is "post-diverse" or "multicultural", is also in the presentational interest of the state. Mishra and Devarakonda note that the "countries in order to cope with the problems of cultural diversity, should invest in cultivating tolerance" (285). If films like *PK* are doing the job of creating this consciousness that all humans are alike, created by the same God and that the differences are arbitrary, it fits in the agenda of the

government too.

Conclusion

Textual analysis of the film *PK* reveals that there are multiple binaries that the film deconstructs that in turn challenge the cultural diversity of the Indian society represented by the film. The apparent target of the film might be religion but underlying the main motif of religion are all social practices that divide one social group from another. The reasons for challenging the diversity, we have discussed, are the demands of a globalized world. By propagating the possibility of a homogenous society, *PK* is marketing itself as a product that can be globally consumed. From a Marxian perspective, the film is “reproducing the conditions of production” (Althusser 1342). In order to make the product as appropriate for global consumers, *PK* is trying to propagate a society that is part of the Global village where no religion in particular and no social practice in general should be diversifying the consumers into different groups. “Similarisation” of the audience works in the interests of the filmmakers. Had the film reinforced the binaries that it has actually constructed, it would have pleased the local Indian audience but it would lose its international audience. Reinforcing Hindu/Muslim and Indian/Pakistani binaries could actually reverse the success of the film. It would not only be immediately banned in Pakistan, it could also be rejected by Muslim minority in India. The filmmakers have gone so far as to incorporate an alien character in the film to create the conditions of acceptability of whatever is foreign.

 The film is also working as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) as Althusser would call it. Althusser called all modes of communication as ISAs. A film can never be released until it

passes the censorship. *PK* was allowed to be released despite severe backlash and protests from the religious groups in India because it certainly was supporting the state ideologically. Mishra and Devarakonda observe that the “emerging opportunities both in the global and domestic markets can help India reach US Dollar 130 billion in IT-BPO revenues and is expected to contribute about 7% to the annual GDP” (285). The Indian government tries to ensure through its constitution that all social groups get equal opportunities and services but the recurrent clashes in India on the basis of religion, caste and language is a proof of the fact that there still is intolerance among groups and a resistance toward foreign cultures (285). So the acceptance of the difference within the community and of the foreign culture can be inculcated through media and when films like *PK* serve such a function, they get full support by the government.

Working under the financial and political constraints, *PK* heralds the paradigm shift in Indian cinema from diversity to “post-diversity” or “multiculturalism” that serves both the market and the state to fit in the globalist agenda. The current study was limited in the sense that it only looked at the deconstruction of some of the binaries to challenge the diversity to fit in the agenda of globalization; however, there are many other avenues that the study of the film opens for future research. One very significant direction could be looking at how the film becomes an agent of social change, shaking the foundations of long-cherished ideals of a declaredly secular but subtly fundamentalist entity.

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The Difference between Pakistani Idiom and Indian Idiom: A Case Study of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Anam Akbar and Hassan Qadeer

Abstract

*Many linguists believe that there is no difference between the Pakistani idiom and the Indian idiom because Urdu and Hindi have the same linguistic structure. However, the expression of the Indian idiom in works of art is somewhat different than the Pakistani idiom. Critics, like Tariq Rahman, believe that Pakistani writers, not using English creatively, limit the use of idiom to native lexical items only. The Indian idiom, on the other hand, contextualizes native expression by actively experimenting with the English language. This research paper will test this hypothesis on the English language employed in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*-a Pakistani novel- and *The White Tiger* -an Indian novel. Furthermore, it will explore the reasons for the difference between the Pakistani and the Indian idiom.*

For this purpose, it will first define idiom and analyze the language and idiomatic variations as employed by Pakistani and Indian authors in conveying local narrative and indigenous expressions. Secondly, it will find the reasons for

the difference between the Pakistani and the Indian idiom. Research methodologies of discourse analysis will be used, and the definition and description of idiom, given by Braj Kachru, Weinreich, and Tariq Rahman will be employed to form the research framework.

*Employing this methodology, this paper will show that it is possible to create a native idiom which is essentially different from the Standard English. Also, it will indicate that the Pakistani idiom is different from the Indian idiom on many linguistic levels- lexical, semantic, and phonemic. These levels are more effectively created in *The White Tiger* than in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which shows that the Indian idiom is more natively contextualized. Moreover, it will point out the factors that limit the native cultural essence of the Pakistani idiom.*

In this way, this paper will serve as a basis to make the Pakistani idiom culturally rich because it will point out the reasons for its limitation. This will lead to language experimentation and innovation. Also, the reasons pointed out in this paper can be used to write another statistical research paper, and the research framework employed for this research can be used to analyze the language used in many other novels.

Previously, researches have been conducted to find idiom in poetry, but no one has taken into consideration the difference between the Pakistani

and the Indian idiom by narrowly focusing on Pakistani and Indian novels and comparing them. In this way, this research will be innovative in analyzing the use of language in novels.

Keywords: Idiom, cultural, indigenous, colonization.

Literature produced, in English, in South Asia has always been a source of major contestation when it comes to the representation of indigenous language and culture. Since English is the language of the colonizer, critics raise several questions on the 'naturalization' of this language in South Asian settings. Is it possible to represent in a foreign language, the intricacies of the indigenous culture? Is it possible to idiomatically deviate from native English and construct an idiom that is indigenous? How successful have the authors in India and Pakistan been when it comes to the construction of local idiom? This research paper tends to find the answers to these questions through analyzing the language employed in *The White Tiger* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

There are several reasons for selecting these novels as case studies. Both of these novels depict the predicaments of their respective societies on which they are based. The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* deals with the sensibility and identity of a Pakistani after the 9/11 attacks. In this way, it tries to propagate native sensibility related to the culture and identity of a Pakistani, which contributes to the creation of a local idiom. Similarly, *The White Tiger* represents an Indian society stranded by a rigid caste system and an ineffective democracy. Cultural and political responses of an Indian society are portrayed through the use of the English language. This use of language to show the Indian culture helps in idiomatic creation. Hence, native sensibility and cultural

penetration can be observed in both these texts, which is important for the creation of a local idiom. Therefore, they provide us a fair ground for comparison in order to find the difference between the Pakistani idiom and the Indian idiom.

For this purpose, this research essay will first define idiom. Secondly, it will describe how a native idiom is created. Thirdly, it will analyze the language used in both the novels. Idiomatic deviations employed by both the authors in describing different aspects of the local culture will be analyzed and compared with each other. Finally, the possible reasons for the difference in the practice of the Pakistani and Indian English will be discussed.

As the colonizers come in contact with the indigenous culture, a modified language evolves. This means that the vocabulary of one language finds its way into another language. This transfer of vocabulary can take place on many levels. Weinreich describes this process as:

The ways in which one vocabulary can interfere with another are various. Given two languages, A and B, morphemes may be transferred from A into B, or B morphemes may be used in new designative functions on the model A-morphemes with whose content they are identified; finally, in the case of compound lexical elements, both processes may be combined. (47)

All these levels increase the "functional naiveness" of a language which, according to Kachru, can be determined by two parameters: "range and depth of language in a society" (92). He says that "range refers to the domain of function, and depth refers to the degree of social penetration of language" (92).

In the light of the definition of an idiom and the parameters given by Weinreich, Tariq Rahman, and Kachru, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* will be analyzed.

Hindi language has been appropriated in *The White Tiger*, which can be regarded as the Indian idiom. Loanwords are used for local food items, places, castes, and cultural practices. For instance, "dosa," "gulab jamun," and "paan" are the various food items (Adiga 13-16). These are the food items which usually form a part of Indian culture because they are quite famous in India. The names of local places include "Vasant Kunj, Aurangzeb Road, Jantar Mantar, and Qutub" (118-135). The purpose of their incorporation is to depict the culture of India; for example, paan is regarded as a "traditional mouth freshener and digestive" in India (Jolly, "The Indian Paan - A Traditional Indian Mouth Freshener and Digestive"). The word "paan" is used throughout the text, and it appears to be the only common thing used by the people of Darkness and the people of Light, which is very ironical. A country claims to be the world's largest democracy, but its citizens are so divided by caste and social status that there is no connecting link between them besides 'paan'. Similarly, different Hindi words for castes are also appropriated to show the rigidity of the hierarchical social structure. For instance, the word 'Halwai' is repeated several times in the text. Especially, in the protagonist's interaction with Thakur Ramdev to get a job, the word is repeated six times (62-64). Hence, the employment of the word 'Halwai' not only depicts the caste system in India but also satirizes it by categorizing and limiting the profession of 'halwai' to the lower caste. Different cultural practices are also introduced through the employment of native words, for example, "namaste" (4-9). However, the way it is used shows not only a cultural practice but

also an act that propagates the false image of a “moral and saintly India” (4). If analyzed, it becomes clear that language appropriation is taking place, in the novel, on a manipulative level, hypnotizing the reader into entering the depicted cultural domain. Therefore, Adiga shows different aspects of India through using loanwords and appropriating them to show the cultural and political sensibility.

On this first level of indigenization of English, Adiga appropriates language more than Hamid does. He does not limit language to lexical food items and places only but also uses it to represent different cultural aspects and practices. Moreover, he not only incorporates but also appropriates language by employing native words for cultural representation and satirical purpose. Language appropriation is greater in *The White Tiger* than in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This helps Adiga create the Indian Idiom which is culturally richer than the Pakistani idiom on this first level of appropriation.

Translation forms the second level of an idiom. On this level, native sensibility and cultural aspects are represented through the use of English. Hence, English is employed as a vessel which contains indigenous content.

Using English as a medium, Pakistani sensibility is illustrated in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Changez talks about his “traditional sense of deference to one’s (his) seniors” (Hamid 24). He says: “If English had a respectful form of the word you- as we do in Urdu- I would have used it to address them (older workers) without the slightest hesitation” (111). Two things can be implied by analyzing these sentences. Firstly, he is proud of his cultural value of respecting one’s elders. Secondly, he is not only taking pride, but also distinguishing his culture from that of

America by relating his cultural sensibility. Hence, through the use of English, Hamid separates his culture from the English language and culture, thus creating an idiom.

Also, the cultural aspect is portrayed by explaining the tradition of sadqa or charity and giving a reference to Urdu poetry. Changez explains the practice of sadqa- which is translated as charity- when his mother “twirled a hundred-rupee note around my (his) head to bless my (his) return (Hamid 143). He also says that foreigners usually misconstrue the “significance” of beard by thinking that a bearded man does not drink (61). Then he describes intoxication as one of the central motifs of Urdu poetry; “indeed, in our poetry and folk songs, intoxication occupies a recurring role as a facilitator of love and spiritual enlightenment” (62). Here, Hamid uses language to propagate his own literary tradition which is a part of Pakistani culture. He is also trying to criticize the post 9/11 western understanding in which every bearded person is considered an extremist. Hence, Hamid is contextualizing the English language with the help of Pakistani sensibility.

Besides describing the cultural sensibility, Hamid also subverts the western notion which associates fundamentalism with Islam or Muslims. Throughout the text, fundamentalism is described as “Underwood Samson’s guiding principle” (Hamid 112). Hamid tries to absolve his nation from the charges of fundamentalism or at least to show the fundamentalism of the West. Hence, he puts forwards the sensibility, culture, and thoughts of Pakistan, using English as a vessel.

Likewise, the socio-cultural and political representation of Indian society, through the English language, can also be seen in *The White Tiger*. Talking about his caste, Balram says: “That’s my caste—my destiny... That’s why Kishan and I kept getting jobs at

sweetshops wherever we went. The owner thought, Ah, they're Halwais, making sweets and tea is in their blood" (Adiga 63). Even in translation, he incorporates Hindi words. The choice of words in these lines depicts the social reality of India which, despite its economic progress, is still clinging to the discriminatory system of caste. He uses the word "Mother Ganga" for the river Ganga which illustrates the cultural notion of veneration associated with Ganga (15). To show the cultural and religious significance of Ganga, he says that it is the "river of illumination, protector of us all, breaker of the chain of birth and rebirth" (15). "Special pooja" is celebrated for the Great Socialist, and "mutton biryani" is given to people outside the temple (100). Through these particular words, Adiga unfurls a political aspect of India where the domains of politics and religion interfere with each other. Hence, social realities are incorporated and criticized in the translational level of the Indian idiom.

The description of the things associated with rural culture is very vivid. Balram describes temple as a "tall, whitewashed, conelike tower, with black intertwining snakes painted on all its sides" and Hanuman as "a saffron-coloured creature, half man, half monkey ... everyone's favorite god in the Darkness" (Adiga 19). Similarly, the description of rooster and buffalo also shows the cultural setting. Thus, "indianization" of English can be seen through the "propagation of the Indian culture" through translation (Lukas 3).

On the level of translation, the Pakistani idiom and the Indian Idiom in the concerned texts are not much different; however, the descriptive vividness of the native images is different. Both the texts show religious and cultural aspects and socio-political sensibility. Besides the incorporation of socio-

cultural, religious, and political aspects, the description of native scenes is very lucid in *The White Tiger*. Thus, the only difference is in the lucidity of cultural representation which can be found more in *The White Tiger* than in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Sometimes, during translation, semantic variation occurs due to which the meaning of a phrase changes. This gives rise to the third level of an idiom. This level is not significantly present in both the texts. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, while mentioning the lexical food items, Hamid translates one dish as “the stewed foot of goat” by which he possibly means “raan” (Hamid 115). However, the meaning of the dish has been entirely changed due to the use of the word “foot”. Such semantic variations can be hardly observed in *The White Tiger*.

An idiom is a native cultural, political, and historical understanding enfolded in a foreign language. Kachru, a prominent subcontinental linguist, describes that idiomatic deviation is the result of a “new- un-English linguistic and cultural setting in which language is used” (qtd. in Rahman 14). It shows that idiom is created when languages meet. Weinreich also says that idiom is constructed when “one vocabulary ... interfere(s) with another” (Weinreich 47). Hence, employing the ideas of Kachru, Tariq Rahman, and Weinreich, an idiom can be defined as a contextualized language which signifies the sociocultural aspects and sensibility of a society on the phonological, morphological, and semantic level. According to Tariq Rahman, an idiom is constructed when “words can be (a) borrowed (b) semantically changed (c) translated (d) hybridized” due to the result of mutual inference of languages (Rahman 61). Therefore, indigenization of a language takes place on these four levels, creating an idiom.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the first level of the idiom is created by the incorporation and appropriation of Urdu words in the English language. For this purpose, Tariq Rahman uses the term “borrowed” words (61). Loanwords are usually those words that are taken from one language into another. In the case of Pakistani idiom, this incorporation is usually limited to certain lexical food items, dress codes, and names of places. For instance, talking about the food of Lahore, Changez mentions some food items that are a famous part of the Lahori cuisine: “kebab of mutton and the tikka of chicken” (Hamid 115). Similarly, he twice uses the word “kurta” in order to show his ethnic peculiarity (55). He also mentions certain places, such as Anarkali and Nathia Galli (2, 67). If this morphological incorporation is analyzed, it becomes evident that the purpose of appropriation of language is to create an identity and to show the culture of a nation which, in the post 9/11 scenario, is mostly associated with fundamentalism and extremism. Changez says that Pakistanis take “inordinate pride” in their food and the lexical food items are appropriated to show this pride that forms a nation’s identity (115). Similarly, the cultural attire, kurta, is something that becomes a basis of the distinction between the Pakistani and foreign culture. The places mentioned in the text are usually those that are either famous for food or for tourism. The trip to Nathia Galli is one of the memories of Changez; thus, it is a part of his Pakistani identity. Therefore, on the first level, the Pakistani idiom is created because appropriation is taking place with incorporation. However, it is a shallow level of idiomatic creation.

A particular kind of vocabulary is used to contextualize the English language. For instance, rickshaw-pullers wait “for the bus to disgorge its passengers” (Adiga 23). Merriam-Webster dictionary defines disgorge as “to discharge or let go of rapidly or

forcefully" ("Disgorge"). Hence, the use of this particular word helps create an imagery where a bus is full of so many dehumanized persons who are treated like things. This kind of image can be often seen in the countries where either transports facilities are not good or people lack order. India is one of those countries. Therefore, local images are also described through the use of the English language.

Hybridization is the fourth level of idiom, which is formed by the combination of two languages. When the boundaries of two languages meet and morphemes overlap, a new word can be formed. It shows experimentation with language because the hybridized word contains morphemes of both the languages. Sometimes, authors coin new terms for their use in order to make a cultural aspect clear. It can be found in both the texts. Hybridization can take place on two levels: morphological and phonemic.

Weinreich has described many levels of the interference of morpheme. Two of his levels are important to understand the hybridization process. First, "the use of A morphemes in speaking (or writing) language B (30). Second, "through the identification of a specific A-morpheme, a change (extension, reduction) in the function of B-morpheme on the model of the grammar of language A" (30).

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, only the hybridization of morphemes is present. For instance, Changez says that "I (he) suspected my (his) Pakistaniness was invisible" (Hamid 82). 'Pakistaniness' is a hybridized term which signifies the socio-cultural position and mindset of someone who is a citizen of Pakistan. In this particular context, it is used as a demeaning term—a native attribute of Changez which he is ashamed of- in order to

signify the conflict which the protagonist faces between owning his national identity and taking pride in being a part of one of the most successful companies in America. Also, hybridization can be seen in the treatment of certain lexical food items, such as “jalebis” (6). English case marker (s) is added to a word that is in Urdu. Here, the first level of the interference of morphemes is taking place because the morphemes of English language are used in writing (or speaking) Urdu. Hence, this is the result of the morphological hybridization.

In contrast, hybridization, in *The White Tiger*, can be seen on two levels: morphological and phonetic. In morphological hybridization, inflectional interference is evident as Weinreich describes in his model. Different Hindi words are pluralized in the text through the addition of the case marker (s). For instance, Balram mocks the hypocrisy of the Indian politicians who “do namastes” to show the morality of India' (Adiga 4). Similarly, talking about his caste, he says that they are “Halwais” who make sweets like “Gulab jamuns, (and) laddoos” (Adiga 63-65). Following the same pattern, many other anglicized Hindi words can be seen, such as, “sadhus” and “rotis” (15-33). Treating Weinreich's model in a broader perspective, this interference can be extended to the level of words. For example, the teacher of Balram was a “paan-and-spit-man” (29). In this case, Hindi word ‘paan’ is used with English words to form a compound noun, but the word class of ‘paan’ remains the same; it remains a noun.

Another level of morphological interference is incorporated in the text in which, according to Weinreich, through the addition or association of Hindi words with English morphemes (or words), a change occurs in the function of Hindi words (30). For instance, a rickshaw driver “cringed and namasted me (Balram) in apology”

(Adiga 158). Here, the association of the case marker —ed changes the grammatical function of the noun 'namaste,' thus making it a verb. Therefore, the function of a Hindi word is extended, following the model of the English language.

In the same way, phonemic hybridization is also present in *The White Tiger*. It is an "interference (which) arises when a bilingual identifies a phoneme of a secondary system with one in the primary system and, in reproducing it, subjects it to the phonetic rules of the primary language" (Weinreich 14). For instance, Balram is unable to produce the word, "mall;" he mispronounces it as "maal" or "mool" (Adiga 147). The phonemes (a:) or (u:) interfere with the phoneme (ɒ) and ultimately, take its place, resulting in the mispronunciation of the word. Therefore, Adiga shows the influence of mother tongue on the second language through the phonemic hybridization.

The Indian idiom, on the level of hybridization, is different from the Pakistani Idiom due to "functional nativeness" (Kachru 92). The Indian English is more contextualized than the Pakistani English because the phenomenon of language interference is present on two levels, whereas in Pakistani English, it is limited to only the level of inflectional morphology. Therefore, using the terms of Braj Kachru, the Indian idiom created through translation is rich in both "range" and "depth" (92).

All these levels of idiomatic creation indicate that the Pakistani idiom is different from the Indian idiom. Due to a greater level of the appropriation of loanwords, more vivid use of translational level, and more experimentation with language in the form of hybridization, the Indian idiom in *The White Tiger* becomes culturally richer than the Pakistani idiom in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This cultural richness of the Indian idiom gives it

a characteristic quality which is native in its essence. So, the Indian idiom is more native in its function than the Pakistani idiom.

There are various reasons for the difference between the Pakistani idiom and the Indian idiom. Three most prominent reasons are: the treatment of English as colonizer's language in Pakistan, traditional methods of teaching English in Pakistan, and English as a more widespread communicative medium in India.

Another reason for the difference between the Pakistani and Indian idiom is the level of acceptability. As compared to the Indian idiom, the Pakistani idiom is not fully developed yet because the understanding of English as colonizer's language has always created an obstacle in the adoption of English as a language commonly used by masses. English is still treated as a foreign language in Pakistan due to its lack of common usage. In India, the local idiom of English is a standard for the people. On the other hand, the local idiom of English is yet a sub-standard in Pakistan because it is not generally accepted. According to Tariq Rahman, this "non-acceptance of non-native English was partly motivated by ethnocentrism on the part of native speakers" (15). Due to this sharp sense of distinction between native and foreign language, cultural penetration in English used by the Pakistani authors, is less as compared to the English used by the Indian authors. Therefore, in comparison with the Indian idiom, the Pakistani idiom is still in its developmental stages because of the notion of otherness associated with the English language.

Also, the role of academia contributes to the different nature of idioms in Pakistan and India. In Pakistan, conventional methods of teaching are used in order to teach English. In these traditional methods, the rules of grammar are taught first. It limits the creativity of students because abidance to the rules does not

allow them to make mistakes or to do experimentation with English. This limitation hinders the writers to create idiom and limits them to the use of the Standard English language only. On the contrary, the Indian idiom is more developed than the Pakistani idiom because the level of experimentation by the Indian authors is higher as compared to the level by the Pakistani authors. This experimentation allows them to think out of the confines of rules and to use English creatively. Thus, the methods employed by teachers to teach the English language affect the creation of idioms.

As compared to the Pakistani idiom, depth of the Indian idiom is more penetrating because English is used as a communicative medium by different classes of people there. Due to the widespread use of English as a local communicative tool, the native idiom is created because acculturation takes place. Hence, language interference occurs. Furthermore, cultural roots of the idiom get strengthened because it is created by common people, and it is for the common people of India. On the other hand, such cultural penetration in the Pakistani idiom is limited because English is not used by everyone. Athar Tahir (2016) says that Pakistani writers stick to Queen's English. This implies that the Pakistani writers do not use English as a communicative medium. Hence, the literature produced in Pakistan is limited to a certain class of readers because it is not widely read. Therefore, due to the difference of the use of English by natives, the Indian idiom differs from the Pakistani idiom.

An idiom is a distinct cultural expression that carries native sensibility. It is possible to represent the intricacies of an indigenous culture by creating an idiom that incorporates a native culture. For this purpose, different levels of the creation of an

idiom are used which increase the 'functional nativeness' of a language. These levels of a local idiom are created when one language interferes with another language, resulting in the overlapping of morphemes and phonemes. The Indian and Pakistani authors have attempted to create idiom. The idioms that they have created contain deviations from the Standard English language; thus, they have indigenized English. The deviations are evident on four different levels- lexical, translational, semantic, and morphological. On the basis of the levels of idiomatic creation, the Indian idiom is more culturally rich than the Pakistani idiom. Hence, Indian authors have been more successful in the creation of a native idiom as compared to Pakistani authors. Several reasons account for this difference. First, English is still considered as a colonizer's language in Pakistan. Second, the Pakistani authors do not experiment with language because they are traditionally taught to strictly follow the rules of the English grammar. Finally, English is used by all the social classes in India, which makes it a communicative medium. Therefore, in order to create a literature that has a characteristic 'Pakistaniness' as its defining feature, the young writers of Pakistan should work to eliminate these barriers and use language creatively.

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Tracing the Roots of Terrorism: A Study of Melancholy in *The Sentimental Terrorist* and *Checkpoint*

Abida Younas and Durre Shahwar

Abstract

*This study is an attempt to explore the terrorists' melancholic state of mind. It has been observed that melancholia, unlike mourning, prompts a person for the future course of action. It does not stop activities of life. Instead the melancholic mind has a tendency for action. For this reason, this study has been undertaken to explore the melancholic state of mind that seems to justify the maniacal response of the common citizens who often resort to acts of terrorism. Through the lens of Freud, Biesecker, Abraham and Torok, we will try to explore the relationship between melancholia and terrorism. Moreover, we will also look for how melancholia in the civilians affects them and prompts them towards terrorist activities. We also attempt to explore the root cause of terrorists' violence by carrying out a study of the character Mohsin from *The Sentimental Terrorist: A Novel of Afghanistan* by Talwar and of Jay from *Checkpoint* by Baker. Unlike the previous studies, we try to explore the psyche of terrorists that provokes them for carrying out violent acts in the first half of our study. The second half of our research talks about how the terrorist organizations*

tactfully exploit the melancholic state of mind of ordinary citizens and the susceptibility of such melancholics for risking anything for their own benefits. The study is significant as it shows that terrorism today is not just a random barbaric action on the part of terrorists but retaliation to the oppression that they have been through once.

Key Words: Terrorist, Melancholia, Maniacal, Terrorism, Barbarism.

The rampant terrorism is the gravest threat to the world's security and peace in the contemporary eon. Many actions have been taken on part of governments as well as by the private sector to prevent terrorism. However, these efforts have mostly been in vain, as there has been a lack of an appropriate framework for understanding the psyche of the terrorists and their motives behind such acts. Terrorism today is not simply an unintentional act of violence, but is perpetrated intentionally "for clear purposes and by people with clear agendas" (Nassar 23). Terrorism, these days, is used for "furthering some ideological, religious or political objective" (Borum 6). Nassar rightly observes that "terrorism is not a genetic disease but a societal one" (Nassar 23).

In his book, *Psychology of Terrorism*, Borum tries to explain the violent behavior of an individual or organization through psychological theories. In line with Freud, he also believes that human beings have *eros*, the life force, and *thanatos*, death force, that "sought internal balance" (11). Violence, or in other words, terrorism is seen as a "displacement of thanatos from self and onto others" (11). Many theorists have tried to define violence by using psychoanalytic notions but no one has come up with "psychoanalytic theory of violence" (12). The premise, that

terrorist actions are the outcome of clear objectives, needs to be reconnoitered. In this study, I have attempted to explore the root cause of terrorists' violence. Unlike the previous studies, I try to explore the psyche of terrorists that provokes them to carry out violent acts in the first half of my study. The second half of my research talks about how the terrorist organizations tactfully exploit the melancholic state of mind of ordinary citizens and the susceptibility of such melancholy for their own benefits.

In *Globalization and Terrorism: The Migration of Dreams and Nightmares*, Jamal R. Nassar identifies terrorism "as a response of desperation, incited by injustice and oppression" (35). The contemporary world is characterized by globalization. For its defenders, globalization is the celebration of individuality, freedom, wealth, happiness and democracy. However, for its detractors, globalization is marked as being harmful as it increases the domination of the already dominant ones, that is, the developed and wealthier countries, over the dominated or the under-developed countries. Globalization is therefore believed to intensify the domination of haves over the have-nots.

It is a well-known fact that globalization is enacted from above which is perpetually contested from below. It is because the discourse of globalization is deeply embedded in the discourse of wealth and power due to which it increases the hegemony of the rich over the poor. On one hand, it brings the homogenization of cultures, people, technologies and economies whereas on the other hand, it increases the concentration of power in the hands of a few influential organizations. This concentration of power with the influential gives an edge to the powerful countries to use it against the weaker ones. For this reason, globalization, on one hand, is greeted with celebration and admiration, but on the other hand it

becomes “foreboding and dismay” (Gibson 80) especially for the third-world countries. The way globalization has changed people’s lifestyle, it has changed the way of resistance as well. Instead of being subtle and passive, resistance has now taken an active form. With the advancement of technology, traditional warfare has now been replaced with “explosives, airplanes, missiles, chemicals and information technologies” (Nassar 4). Thus, against the oppressive structure of the world, the oppressed countries and their people have raised the movement of resistance against globalization. This resistance has been identified by Barber as “jihad”. It would not be wrong to say that what is being labeled as terrorism in current times is in reality a jihad waged by the oppressed against their powerful oppressors.

The Sentimental Terrorist: A Novel of Afghanistan by Rajesh Talwar and *Checkpoint* by Nicholson Baker record the retaliation or the jihad of the oppressed class against the so-called war on terror. *The Sentimental Terrorist: A Novel of Afghanistan* is the story of Mohsin who lost his family during the bombing of Afghanistan. Talwar tells the tale from the terrorist’s point of view and shows how the pain of losing loved ones pushes an intelligent, educated and honest man into becoming a terrorist. In the same way, Baker in *Checkpoint* narrates the story of Jay who wants to assassinate President Bush because he is the one responsible for waging the war against Iraq. The novel is not about Jay’s unstable state of mind, rather what makes him lose his mind. The common theme of both the novels is that both writers do not only narrate the violent stories of their protagonists but they also explicate beautifully what provokes them to be violent. The protagonists of both novels speak on the behalf of all those who watched hopelessly and angrily while Iraq and Afghanistan were bombed. After watching “bombing innocent civilians all over Afghanistan”,

Mohsin seems unable to “forgive [Amrikans]” (Talwar 89) and this attitude turns him into a melancholic subject. Likewise, in *Checkpoint*, Jay has “reached [the] point of intolerability” (Baker 46) which makes him a melancholic subject and in return he wants to murder President Bush.

In “Mourning and Melancholia”, Freud highlights the symptoms of melancholia that a melancholic subject when loses his loved ones, loses his or her interest in the outer real world; he or she experiences “loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that find[s] utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (1). In the case of Mohsin, in *The Sentimental Terrorist: A Novel of Afghanistan*, when he loses Mumtaz as the love object of his life and then his own family, he is turned into a melancholic subject. However, in contrast to Freud, Mohsin’s melancholic state does not prevent him from further action. Instead, Mohsin stands for revenge as described “a cold rage descended on me then. There would be blood to pay for this. I would destroy everything. There would be no limit to my vengeance” (Talwar 73). This attitude of Mohsin signals to the Ranjana Khanna’s notion of melancholia where “acts towards the future” (qtd. in Kanwal 82) exist. Khanna states that the melancholic subject takes progressive action because for him “the hope for a better future persists” (qtd. in Kanwal 82). However, in the case of Mohsin, his progressive action is in the form of jihad as “there is only one thing to do. Jihad. Jihad is the answer” (Talwar 73). This jihad, however, is not because of his hope but because of his aggression as he says “I will do anything to avenge this attack, I muttered to myself again and again throughout the night. Anything” (Talwar 74). The aggressive conduct of Mohsin is an outcome of his frustration that he

experiences in the form of separation from his loved object of life, Mumtaz. alongwith the anger that arises because of the loss of his secondary loved object in the shape of his family.

Likewise, in *Checkpoint*, Jay is also a melancholic subject who mourns for the loss of innocent Iraqis. Like Mohsin, Jay's melancholic state of mind does not prevent him from action; rather, it prompts him for violent action which is an outcome of his anger. When he discusses the brutality of President Bush with Ben, he says that "this guy is beyond the beyond. What he's done with this war. The murder of the innocent. And now the prisons. It's too much. It makes me so angry" (Baker 7). This instance highlights the fact that like Mohsin, Jihad of Jay is also a denouement of his anger and frustration. It would be relevant to state here that Jay is frustrated and depressed because the woman, whom he loves, abandons him. He loses his job as a teacher and is also declared as being a bankrupt who spends his time reading different blogs. However, his frustration and depression are further heightened and worsened by the war waged by President Bush against Iraq. It might be because Jay has identified himself as one of the Iraqis who are killed and murdered for no reason. This act of Jay can be identified with Freud's notion of identification. Identification is a psychological process whereby an individual identifies himself and his situation with some other incidents and situations that are more likely to match with his position (qtd. in Erwin 87). Jay, who is being left alone and unemployed, identifies his position with those Iraqis who are being tortured for no reason. For that reason, he stands with them and says that "I shouted stuff that I never would have believed that I would shout. My voice was destroyed by the end of the day, I was just croaking. Stop the violence! Stop the hate!" (Baker 13).

Abraham and Torok's discourse of *Mourning and Melancholia* can best explain the aggressive behavior of Mohsin and Jay. According to Abraham and Torok, when a person loses the primary love object of his life, his fantasy incorporates and "implement[s] literally something that has only a figurative meaning" (Abraham and Torok 126). This secondary object substitutes the primary love object and overcomes its loss. However, if any foreign object threatens the secondary love object, at this point the mourning for the loss of primary object becomes melancholic and this loss becomes the cause of aggression. In the case of Mohsin, after the loss of secondary love object, family, his private grief for the loss of his primary love object becomes his public grief. Kanwal rightly argues that after the loss of secondary love object, a Melancholic subject's grief becomes more destructive in a way that it does not only harm him but others around him as well (Kanwal 167). For example, after the loss of his family, Mohsin indulges in the violent activity of terrorism. Through this act, Mohsin does not only affect his own life but many others as well; yet, he does not consider it as a bad or violent activity. In this regard, Kanwal claims that a subject's melancholia "provides a justification for not feeling guilty or ashamed of the worst things a melancholic subject may do" (*Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction* 172). Moreover, Abraham and Torok also assert that "the more suffering and degradation the object undergoes (meaning: the more he pines for the subject he lost) the prouder the subject can be" (qtd. in Kanwal 172). By serving a terrorist group and working for them by targeting guest houses where foreigners stay, Mohsin and his other friends feel proud as described "there was no other way for us to regain our pride, our self-esteem. Associating with the Taliban was necessary if we wished to hit back" (Talwar 124) though initially they are

very much against the Taliban “we’d both previously been opposed to the Taliban, now we were working with them” (Talwar 124).

In the same way in *Checkpoint*, when Jay loses his primary love object, that is, the woman whom he loves and his job as the secondary love object, he directs his frustration towards the president of USA. It is because he is already very critical towards the war waged by America as he says that this war

is an abortion performed on a whole country. --- I’m sobbing, I’m screaming with these people because we all sensed and we knew that the war the United States was waging on that patchwork country was, was – it was ushering a new kind of terribleness into the world. And we knew that we had to do something. So we marched and marched, and we shouted till we couldn’t shout anymore, and then we all went home and we put on our pajamas or our whatevers, and we went to sleep and woke up the next morning, and what? People were still getting their limbs blown off – families were still being killed. (Baker 14)

These illustrations divulge that Jay has identified himself with one of the Iraqis and he mourns for their loss by criticizing his own government. Furthermore, his individual grief becomes public and he decides to assassinate the President of USA “for the good of human kind” (Baker 6).

It can be argued that in both novels, the individual or in other words, the personal grief of both protagonists, Mohsin and Jay, becomes a national consciousness. Mohsin’s melancholia is a

manifestation of his nation's sorrow. Being an Afghani and "a true Pashtun" (Talwar 109), he is targeting Americans because they are responsible for murdering and killing many "innocent, women, children..." (Talwar 124). Thus, it would not be wrong to say that Mohsin suffers because of his nation's sorrow. Jay, though not one of the Iraqis, suffers because of Iraqi nation's sorrow. It is because he has identified himself as one of them.

At this juncture, it is important to discuss the effects of the terrorists' rhetoric which provokes common civilians for terrorist activities by relating the ferocious act to the sublime cause for their country. In relation to national security, Biesecker, in her study, "No Time for Mourning: The Rhetorical Production of The Melancholic Citizen-Subject in the War on Terror" provides notion of melancholia in three distinct ways. The work of Biesecker is important because it theorizes that how "the future could be affected by melancholic power" (Biesecker 150). Biesecker states that the loss, melancholic experiences, "create[s] an impetus for response within the melancholic subject" (153). In her view, one needs "to identify the galvanizing force that puts melancholia into action" (153). It is because, this step would help how the melancholia exists within subjects and how it is used for political purpose in the case of terrorism. In his work, "Drone Melancholia", Durand analyzes Bush's rhetoric by using the theoretical framework of Biesecker. He quotes Bush saying that "in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom – the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time – now depends on us" (qtd. in Durand 20). He is of the view that by saying this, Bush prompts the people for military action. Along with it, Biesecker opines that the loss does not only use as galvanizing force for future action but it is also used "to

create a perpetual state of emergency” (Biesecker 155). This is a very critical step in melancholic life as it is at this point the fear of loss justifies the violent activity on the part of melancholic subject. For example, in “Drone Melancholia”, Durand argues that Bush creates a state of emergency by using the omen of loss and justifies his war on terror against Afghanistan and even drone attacks at the North West Frontier of Pakistan. Biesecker uses the same state of emergency for the emergence of next state and that is, “state of exception” (156). The state of exception, in Biesecker’s view, “provides a theoretical backing explaining how the activation of a melancholic subject expands the capabilities of the retort that invokes the fear of a loss that could cause melancholia to emerge” (qtd. in Durand 19). Thus, at the state of exception, any action is allowed to prevent further loss caused by a terrorist attack.

All three tropes are used by Talwar and Baker in their writings. Until now, I have discussed the melancholic state of Mohsin and Jay; however, it is important to discuss who provokes and violates their melancholic state of mind. It is because without knowing this, one cannot reach the fundamental cause of ongoing terrorism and jihadi activities. In the following pages, I now explore all those rhetorics that are used by the so-called jihadis for provoking the common masses for terrorism in order to reach to the verity of Jihadis.

In *The Sentimental Terrorist: A Novel of Afghanistan*, Rajesh Talwar uses all three rhetorics given by Biesecker in order to persuade Mohsin for terrorist activities. For example, after the loss of Mumtaz, his beloved, Mohsin’s grief is further aggravated by the “American aircraft [which] rain bomb” and he loses his entire family in it. He was already hostile towards foreigners when Mumtaz, instead of him, chooses and prefers a foreigner for

marriage. However, the air bombing by the foreigners further intensifies his hostility towards them. It is because his primary love object, Mumtaz and his secondary love object, his family, both are snatched by the foreigners. The same hostility is manipulated by the terrorists for their own cause of destruction. For example, when Mohsin asks Pervez, one of the heads of Terrorist Organizations that "why you're helping me?" in his terrorist missions. To this, Pervez replied that "we have our own reasons for wishing to attack this guest house" (Talwar 108). For this reason, soon after the air bombing incidents, Mullah Shamsuddin, the head of Terrorist activities, along with some of his co-fellows come to Mohsin in order to instigate him for vengeance against the foreigners. It is pertinent to mention here that Mullah Shamsuddin always targets the young ones for the terrorist activities. Throughout the novel, readers meet so many jihadis, like "Abbas, nineteen years old, Hussein, twenty years old and Javed and Suhail, who are hardly fifteen" (Talwar 18) and who are trained by Mullah Shamsuddin. He even once tried to prompt Mohsin against foreigners but at that time he was not successful as described "No, Mullah Sahib --- All the foreigners are not the same" (Talwar 34). However now, he exploits the situation at best and sets off Mohsin against foreigners and *firangis* as described "there are beasts. [Shamsuddin] pulled me to my feet and embraced me, his eyes filled with loathing. You cannot reason with them. There is only one thing to do. Jihad. Jihad is the answer" (Talwar 73). It is at this point, Mohsin decides to take revenge as "a cold rage descend[s] on me then. There would be blood to pay for this. I would destroy everything. There would be no limit for my vengeance" (73). Mohsin, at this stage, even affirms that "I thought of the jihadis as mindless monsters, but today I don't regard them like that any more" (Talwar 23). These evidences clearly illustrate that terrorist organizations

manipulate the situation at their best and use their rhetoric of terrorism tactfully in order to manipulate the common individuals for the so-called noble act. In *The Sentimental Terrorist: A Novel of Afghanistan*, Mullah Shamsuddin uses his terrorist rhetoric at its best to manipulate and brainwash the young minds like Abbas, Mohsin, Javed and many others like them.

Similarly, in *Checkpoint*, Baker also shows the terrorist rhetoric in order to provoke Jay for the terrorist acts. Unlike Mohsin, Jay is not persuaded by any terrorist organizations; instead, he tries to motivate Ben, a friend with whom he converses and shares his plan of assassination. Like Mohsin, Jay is also all set for brutal acts. When his friend Ben tries to stop him from the assassination of the President by saying that “you’re a civilized person” so don’t proceed with this brutal act, Jay responds that “not anymore” (Baker 6). Ben even tries to be logical with Jay and says to him that “look, [Bush] is going to go, it’s inevitable, he’ll have a successor” but Jay is shown as impulsive enough and retorts to Ben that “now. He has to go now” (Baker 7). These examples of text demonstrate that Jay has already made up his mind for slaying President George Bush who is responsible for the killing of hundreds and thousands of innocent Iraqis for no reason as illustrated, “they’ve killed thousands of innocent people. People who are utterly blameless. Thousands of people who have nothing whatsoever to do with any warlike activity” (Baker 26). It is also evident that unlike Freud’s melancholic subject, Jay has full capacity and strength for future action. Though the future course of action is an upshot of his own individual frustration but it is further inflamed by the US attack on Iraq where innocent people are being killed every day in the name of ‘war on terror’.

The second trope that Biesecker mentions in his studies is the state of emergency. By the state of emergency, he means that terrorist organizations always provide justification for their violent activity to his pupils (those who are being prepared for the terrorist activities). This phenomenon is very much visible in the case of Mohsin. For instance, when Mohsin argues with Mullah Shamsuddin over the matter of suicide bombing that it would not be fair to blow all as explicated: "I am not an automaton. Hatred for the Americans who killed my family, burned inside me, but I understood too that an individual soldier may not be responsible. -- I didn't honestly think that anyone who directly or indirectly supported a western government deserved to be blown up" (Talwar 81). However, after listening to Mohsin's view, Mullah Shamsuddin's response is quite significant. He retorts back that "Don't you want to avenge the death of your family?" The mullah leant back in his chair and fixed his watery eyes on me. 'Aren't you a red- blooded Pashtun? Will you take the action of the Amrikans lying down?" (Talwar 81). These examples form the text highlight the fact that Mullah is trying to create the state of emergency in Mohsin by justifying his violence. In the course of the novel, however, he is successful in provoking Mohsin for the violent act. Unlike Mohsin, the state of emergency is not caused by someone else in Jay, it's already there.

In the novel, *Checkpoint*, Jay is shown as a highly impulsive man who seems unwilling to wait for President Bush's retirement. Even though his friend Ben tries to stop him by inducing fear in him by warning him that "they'll shoot you full of bullets and you'll die. Or they'll fry you. Seriously, you'll die" (Baker 7) yet he carries on with his mission and accepts that "I am one of those [bad people]" who are indulged in the barbarous acts of killing others. These illustrations reveal that although Jay knows

that he is going to perform a cruel act yet he is ready to execute this savage act. It is because he thinks that the war, waged by President Bush, needs to be avenged at any cost as he tells to his friend "this war, that [Bush] imposed on the world, when the whole world said no to him so clearly, in the streets, in every country, this war that he forced on humanity – this war will be avenged" (Baker 25). With this, Jay finally reaches the stage of exception where any action of his would be considered as credible.

Once Mullah Shamsuddin is able to foster feelings of insecurity in Mohsin, which in turn creates a state of emergency that allows the action to be taken, the state of emergency logically leads to the state of exception. At the stage of exception, any action would be allowed to be taken against the terrorist attack. Mullah Shamsuddin is finally able to incite Mohsin and lead him to the state of exception where Mohsin thinks that any action against *firangis* is right and justifiable. Mohsin shows his resolution for the terrorist action by saying that "I didn't support Taliban. Until recently, I'd hated them and what they stood for, but those feelings now paled against the far greater fury I felt towards the *firangis*. I wanted the Americans and the foreign military that had come to my country at their behest to leave. Afghanistan was none of their business. Above all, I wanted revenge for the deaths of my sister and family. If this entailed collaboration with the Taliban, then so be it" (Talwar 109). These illustrations show that Mohsin is a susceptible candidate whose frustrations might be exploited by terrorist organizations: Moreover, in the eyes of such melancholics, these acts of retaliatory violence are totally justified. The state of exception nevertheless comes with the justification of saving innocent lives. Bush, while waging war against Afghanistan, states that "we are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first"

(DM 37). In the same way, in the novel, Mullah Shamsuddin legitimizes the killing of *firangis* by saying that these *firangis* are, on one hand, killing the “innocent lives” (Talwar 109) and on the other hand, they are working “against Islam” by providing “*biyaz* [or] interest” (108) to people which is prohibited and *haram* under Islam. With this, it is clear that in order to vitalize the action of Mohsin, Mullah Shamsuddin even employs the Islamic doctrine in his rhetoric. By doing so, Mullah Shamsuddin underpins the state of exception even more. For example, while arguing with Mohsin, he makes use of theological allusions or in other words Islamic doctrine, time and again in order to make the terrorist activities more plausible as described: “these are all the arguments raised by infidels. The *shaitan* can think of many ways to lead the believers astray. --- seeing images in a magazine or newspaper, reading the holy Quran in a script, that is all very different. All that is permissible, even necessary for a good Muslim” (Talwar 88). Moreover, he even says that these *firangis* are indulged in “anti-Islamic activities” (114) which also make their jihad against these *firangis* admissible. Along with the reference from the Islamic discourse, terrorist organizations provoke the young ones and legitimize their terrorist activities by making this activity a noble cause for the country and by linking it with their ego. For example, Mohsin, after Mullah Shamsuddin has brainwashed him, says that “if I didn’t hit back, I wouldn’t feel like a man any more. I wouldn’t have any self-respect. And for a Pashtun, the most important things are self-respect and honor. Life was simply not worth living if you couldn’t hold your head high. This is what I was taught from childhood, and I believed it strongly” (Talwar 90). These evidences clearly explicate that the terrorist organizations enhance the state of exception by using many tactics which, on one

hand, make the action quick and on the other hand, also legalize the terrorist pursuits.

Unlike Mohsin, who needs to be incited at every step, Jay, however, does not need to be prompted by anybody. It would not be wrong to indicate here that Mohsin reaches to the state of exception by the help of terrorist organizations and finally shows his resolution, whereas Jay, since the beginning of the novel, is determined to assassinate the President Bush. He says that “[Bush] took joy in persecuting people” (Baker 15) so I am not going “to let him get away with this” (Baker 7). After learning that Bush uses “napalm in Iraq” war which “starts intense fires” and which are “use[d] to burn people alive” (Baker 9), he feels more disgust[ed] towards President Bush and states that “I am going to kill that bastard” (Baker 10). Moreover, when Ben tells him that “shooting the head of the state is not a solution” (Baker 10), so he should not proceed with his plan of assassination, Jay, in response, justifies his action by reminding him of the blood of innocent people “think of the innocent people. That’s what they would do. In fact, that’s what they did do” (Baker 10). These facts from the text make it apparent that Jay’s antagonism towards President Bush is at peak and he is not ready to give up his plan. He himself says to his friend, Ben that, sometimes “you reach a moment when a different kind of action is necessary and I’ve reached that point” (Baker 16). It is pertinent to mention that like Mohsin, Jay too thinks of his act as noble one, which is taken for the good cause or in other words, for a national cause, as he argues that “I’m going to prevent a certain amount of bloodshed. By causing a minor blip of bloodshed in one human being I’m going to prevent further bloodshed” (Baker 29). This shows that Jay’s action is brutal yet he is driven by national cause. Although he intends to do so for the

good of humanity, his decision of murdering President Bush is nonetheless externally obtruded.

In the end, after thorough dissection of terrorists' psyche, it can be said that instead of mourning, both protagonists acquire melancholic state of mind. Both protagonists, nevertheless, after losing their primary love object, remain at a stable position. It is because both of them substitute their primary love object with the secondary one but their melancholia worsens once they lose their secondary love object. It is at this stage that the anger and frustration rises to the surface which instigates them for violence. It is also worth mentioning here that melancholia can be best manipulated for its own benefits. In case of Mohsin, his melancholic state is exploited by Mullah Shamsuddin for its own terrorist motives, whereas in case of Jay, the situation is reversed. Jay has not been exploited by anybody; rather, his melancholic state of mind has already decided to kill President Bush by any means.

To sum up my debate, I would say that both protagonists' melancholic state of mind escorts them from performative to performance. In *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Live Theory*, Sandra quotes Spivak's new notion of "From Performative to Performance" in which a person is required to take up real action rather than being a spectator of the situation. In some cases, a melancholic ceases normal life activities; however, in case of Mohsin and Jay, their melancholic state of mind does not prevent them from action; rather, they take grave actions. The melancholia of Mohsin and Jay does not keep them in an inactive state. Instead, it foments them for a cruel act. In that case, I would say that reactions are directly proportional to action and every action carries an equally opposite reaction. Keeping in mind this premise.

it would not be wrong to sum up that the violent action of both protagonists is actually the form of retaliation to that brutality that has been perpetrated upon them. Edward Said, in his *Culture and Imperialism*, states that there is always an opposition and resistance against injustices and oppression. He divides resistance into two types: active resistance and passive resistance (Said xii). Unlike passive resistance, active resistance is armed resistance which is served through missiles and bombs in the contemporary world. In *Globalization and Social Movements: Islamism, Feminism and The Global Justice Movement*, Moghadam also conveys the same thought by arguing that people resist the hegemonic power through Social and Justice Movements. Both protagonists, Mohsin and Jay resist those victimizing injustices and oppression through active resistance by unfurling the terrorist agenda.

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Short Stories

Afghan Ghoul

Nasrin Pervin

Memory is a complex thing. It is related to truth but not its twin. It summons with a will of its own. You think you have a memory while as a matter of fact it has you. It is like a haunting ghoul refusing its own death.

Winters in Afghanistan can be hideously unpredictable. Impulsive temperature drops, unusual exposure of white and overwhelming chill at nights define the climate in a whole new avatar over there. It was just another snowy afternoon. Little Afiya wearing her temperate winter clothes came out of the house to play with her father. It was just a month before her second birthday. On a ground, paved with snow white as the heaven, she ran towards her father. They used to play hide and seek for hours. She used to outrun her father every time with her baby steps unaware of the fact that he was losing on purpose. She was too little to understand the preciousness of her joy. She jumped onto her father's lap and he kissed her on the cheeks. As her mother was capturing the divine moment on camera, her father whispered, "You are my dream that came true".

Seattle airport can be obnoxiously busy at times. Frequent landings, instrumental boarding calls and an unabashed rush in people to outrun life somehow interpret the loneliness of the city. All of those seemed oddly conspicuous to Lisa. It was her first time in Seattle. Lisa spent her entire life in Darwin, Australia. As a matter of fact, before coming here, Darwin was the only place she had ever seen in life. After finishing her studies, she started working as an art critique at a famous gallery in Darwin. She was

perfectly happy with her life. That is why she was fairly surprised when she received an offer from the most famous art gallery of Seattle. They praised her critique of an art piece published in an international art magazine and wanted her to join them. At first, Lisa was not very keen about the offer. It was her parents who influenced her to take the job. So, one fine morning she gathered up all her courage and boarded a flight to Seattle. As Lisa was stepping out of the airport, she was overwhelmed by a deviant kind of solemnity. It was snowing outside. She had never seen snowfall before in her life. It was so serene as if God was trying to cover his endeavor with a blanket of divine white. Lisa just stared at that irresistible picture for a couple of moments. She then took a taxi for her office. She followed up with the formal introductions and started for her fully furnished office-sanctioned apartment at the heart of the city. She could sense an eccentric restlessness going inside her.

Lisa was besieged by the phenomenal outburst of salient white. As far as the eyes could stretch, there was only snow. Everything else was imprecise. The only thing she could hear was the innocent giggling of a little girl. There was a mystic succulence all around. Suddenly, she heard the whisper of a man. It took her quite a few seconds to comprehend the words hidden behind the pitch of genuine affection, "You are my dream that came true". On the blink of a second, Lisa opened her eyes. It was the tenth consecutive night that she had this dream. Her heart was beating like the passing wind beside a racing horse. She got up from bed to get a glass of water. She was at a loss of any explanation at all. She never had any kind of nightmares in her life. It all started since the day she arrived in Seattle. On her way to the kitchen, she stopped for a moment to look out of the window. Seattle looked sleepless.

The next morning, Lisa started early for office. She liked her new workplace. People were friendly and she was comfortable with her work. As her car moved through the streets, Lisa thought about the city covered in snow. There was an unspeakable incongruity everywhere. All of it felt oddly familiar. Within a few minutes, she reached office and got busy with her work.

In the coming days, her dreams got worse. Lisa was having bizarre nightmares every night. All of them used to start the same. But soon after the whisper of the man, there used to be pitch black darkness. And all of a sudden, a torturous bright light used to shine up with ungodly sounds. Even in her dreams, Lisa could feel her ears being torn apart by the vicinity of it, and the rays of that furious light felt like thousands of suns burning on a single horizon. Lisa was scared. She googled her symptoms and found a medical condition that matched hers. It was called sleep paranoia. Out of fear she told her parents about the dreams. Following their advice, she booked herself an appointment with a psychiatrist in no time.

The name of Lisa's psychiatrist was Dr. Marlon. He was an elderly man with a jolly yet mystic persona. Her session with him was strangely odd. They only spoke a minute or two about her nightmares. Throughout the session, Dr. Marlon kept talking about her family and childhood. He listened to her recalling her growing days in Darwin. Lisa's astonishment turned into agitation when Dr. Marlon asked for the contact details of her parents in Australia. According to him, it was important for him to talk with her parents in order to understand the root cause of her paranoia. Lisa was disappointed with Dr. Marlon. However, she gave him their Email addresses. She decided to consult somebody else taking Dr. Marlon for a hoax.

With every passing day, Lisa's sleep paranoia was getting worse. Suddenly, one morning, she got a courier from her parents. Out of her amazement, she saw that her parents had requested her to deliver it to Dr. Marlon. All of such uncanny events left her startled. However, Lisa delivered the courier to Dr. Marlon. It was a square box wrapped nicely in foil paper. Dr. Marlon was really happy to see her again. He asked her to revisit him the next week.

It was a usual silent evening for Dr. Marlon. Too many years of being a psychiatrist can mould one to be comfortable with silence. As Dr. Marlon was sitting by the fireplace with a drink on his hand, he thought about Lisa. She was very likely the most interesting case of his career so far. Dr. Marlon was at a loss to figure out how he would explain everything to Lisa. The real name of Lisa is actually Afiya. She was born in Afghanistan. Lisa was not the birth child of her parents. They adopted her. She was only three years old when her parents died of a fatal bombing near Kabul. They brought her to Darwin and raised her as their own. Lisa was never made aware of the facts. Dr. Marlon found those out during his conversation with her parents. Lisa was not supposed to remember anything from her past life as she was only three. However, that was the most fascinating part. A part of her subconscious mind stored and nurtured the memory. The nightmares she was having were not dreams at all. They were in fact a memory of her playing in the snow with her father in a winter of Afghanistan. All these years, her subconscious was hiding the memory until she came to Seattle and saw snowfall. Seeing a snowfall triggered the memory to come back to her. The only way to stop those dreams was to let her conscious mind know about the memory which was trying to break free. Dr. Marlon put down his drink and picked up a photograph from his table. It came along with the other things sent by Lisa's foster parents. Lisa had it

with her when she was adopted. It was a picture of a man kissing his daughter while it was snowing. One could seriously tell that the little girl in the photo was Lisa.

The next week Dr. Marlon told everything to Lisa. She broke down in front of him. She suddenly became very silent. There were tears at the side of Lisa's eyes. She was feeling the urge to speak but could not. She just kept staring at her photograph with her father. The man looked so happy holding her in his arms.

"We live life in moments, Lisa. We just never realize how long they last." Dr. Marlon suddenly spoke to her. "Look at the photo; that moment was the entire life for your father."

Lisa looked at Dr. Marlon and asked, "How do you expect me to live happily knowing all these?"

Dr. Marlon did not reply to her. As she was about to leave the room, he spoke from behind, "You have to live happily, my dear."

With disbelief in her eyes, Lisa asked, "Why?"

Dr. Marlon smiled, nodded his head and said, "Because you are somebody's dream that came true."

When Beggars Die, There Are No Comets Seen

Rabia Ramzan

It's the third day now that I have been coming back to see if I am still reclining there. And to my expectations, I am still there-A vulture taking the frame of my remains to feast on, a dog lying nearby with his mouth drooling excessively, the ravens swooping and snagging above; the ants biting my carrion-Covered with flies, this dirty rag of my body lies there in front of my eyes...Nothing has changed. I am still there. My precious eyes are gone, my face deformed, my arms torn, my legs shredded, my head, half-open; eaten. This is me.

I never had discriminations about how to die, where, or under what conditions. I had no preferences but this, too, wasn't what I expected it to be like. How can I leap up to the sky when the earth is holding me back? How can I go up to heaven with me lounging back here? How can I?

My soul had died long ago. It had departed this world much before and now, the body is also dead. I have shed the prisoner's uniform I was wearing and this filthy carcass of mine will also be consumed soon and then there will be nothing left of me. Nothing.

I had no name and even if I had one, I doubt anyone would have ever found out. I had no parents, no siblings, no home. I had no relatives to mourn over my death. I had no sign to leave behind. I had nothing. I had little to lose and my expectations were, at best, humble. There was nothing in my life, nor in my soul to sustain my hope. Nothing. My spirit was blinkered, not to be corrected by any lens within this orb.

If it is sensible to believe that a person becomes who he/she dreams to be, then it is also reasonable to brood over if I had

dreamt to be who I was. I was born as a beggar. I lived like a beggar. I died like a beggar.

I wanted to be like a bird that doesn't leave any trace of its body to be found after death. I never wanted to be like a beggar: alone. But, being beggar, I couldn't be chooser. I, indeed, had no choice.

Living in the underpass, in this big city, I was one of the many visibly invisible...I lived in the midst of men but living is probably not the right word for I knew I was loved by none; everyone avoided me and when they saw me move from the alley, they would flee in horror and disgust. I never saw better days, but only despair and infirmities. My clothes were rags. I had no shelter, no roof; no refuge of any kind. In summers, I slept out and in winters, in barns and patios for, I had remarkable agility of a feral animal in seeking my abode and slipping there unperceived. People scarcely gave me anything. They would shout at me whenever they saw me coming because seeing me days and night, their patience was exhausted:

“Why don't you go to some other place instead of always limping about here?”

“Be off with you! I gave you Rs.10 only three days ago. I can't feed you all year round.”

“Get lost, you parasite! Go away.”

Despite all this, I could never make up my mind to go elsewhere, because I knew no place on earth but this particular corner of the underpass where I had spent the whole of my miserable being and perhaps because I was afraid of strange places and suspicious glances of people who did not know me.

I never existed in this ball of life. Life and subsistence, happiness and joviality, comfort and peace, love and kindness:

they were never for me. They never were-I could never get them in alms. I begged for them but nobody flung them on me. Why would that happen? They are not stones.

And then, on that freezing, bleak day, when the plains and trees got bare, the hearts frosted, the tempers got irritable, and hands opened only to offer demise, a little boy slipped into the underpass. His mother was probably shopping at the nearby mall and had left him outside. He was eating a doughnut. I was staring at him: no, it was the doughnut, to be precise. He sat next to me and offered me a piece. I flashed over it and managed to lay my bony hand on it. The boy's face lighted up.

"Abdullah, get away from that filthy beggar! Throw away that doughnut, it's dirty. I will buy you another one. Get up! Now, will you?" a rich woman's screams pierced the veil of reality. She almost scolded him and threw the left over doughnut at my face. Seeing them leave in panic, I staggered at my ruined feet and lurched after the piece of doughnut; I picked it up, rubbed it on my dirty sleeve to clean the dust, and ate it with my bared teeth gnashing in a frenzy of hunger and cold. Many people went through the underpass that day, but no one saw tears in my eyes.

On the same evening, I got hit by the car of a rich woman in a colorful dress. Both of my legs had been crushed. Somehow, I dragged my hideous skeletal visage, all red and ghastly, into the underpass and collapsed on the heap of garbage with no plans of moving ever again. My injuries were alarming and I had lost all hope. I lay there, completely defeated, with my eyes tracking everything that moved with a desperate jealousy. White-faced in pain, I only registered that lashing out at me; the passersby were content to watch; to linger near the site of my death.

At first, I continued to lie motionless, unsure of what was happening; then, in a last incredible display of hope, I lifted my head and my eyes reached a state of dead, bleeding, perishing; I was lying beside. This violent blow sent me flying ten paces distant. Sitting there in horror and disbelief, evening came, then night, then dawn, then noon, then evening, then night, then dawn...then, it came to pass, that I had died...I had died so quietly. Why could I not die when trees were green, when flowers were seen? I loved them too well. Why could I not be the child of spring?

What crime had I committed? I know not. I never sinned against anyone, except for begging. Is begging such a heinous crime, such a serious sin that I deserved this?

With his grubby rags clinging to his eerie limbs with an unnatural obstinacy and his ribcage protruding through parchment-thin flesh, he is almost like the old beggars in the stories. Angel or devil? I don't care for he is the only person at the funeral of my youth.

No! But, I know him. He's the kind old beggar who often threw me a few pieces of moldy bread and sometimes allowed me to sleep close to his spot in the underpass. I remember him to be always there; his jaws gaping as he breathed, his skeletal hands reaching out for something, and his ghostly, enlarged pupils fixed on me. The other beggars avoided him and his presence roused them to a lurching, stumbling walk and dragged mewling howls of anger from them.

Kicking me into a small grave-like hole, as if I were a football or a stone, sometimes he moans; sometimes he babbles croakily. Watering the grave, like a newly planted seed, he is shrugging and talking to himself that he doesn't know who the

dead is. There are no tears. Why would there be? The ceremony is over and he is slinking away, possessed with fears confusedly.

Now I leave. The world was happy with me. It would be happier without me. Nevertheless, everybody had grown tired of seeing me, day after day, dragging my deformed and tattered person from door to door, road to road, street to street.

I do not need food now. I do not need clothes. I need nothing. They can keep everything to themselves. They would not need to frown at me. Not anymore. I am taken at last. A good riddance!

The world is a strange place to come in. It's a strange place to live in. It's a strange place to leave.

I have no reason to stay here anymore. I am leaving. Heaven awaits me. Somebody's switched the television on. The news is on with a familiar face: the rich woman is crying with tears trickling down her glowing cheeks.

"There are so many stray dogs in the city and it really makes my heart ache to see them starving and dying helplessly in the streets. Though there are lots of organizations claiming to work for animal rescue and stray dogs, yet I frequently see innocent dogs being emaciated and killed on the road by vehicles or some illness. Isn't there anything we can do about this? Don't they have every right to live in this beautiful world as much as we do? Can't we help them live comfortably? Is there anyone who will help these poor animals? Let us please help these innocent animals. They do not deserve such a bad life. Coming to this world isn't their fault, after all..."

Dirty Max

Sumbal Maqsood

Dirty Max. That's what everyone called him. Allegedly an orphan, raised as a vagabond in the slums, and kicked about ruthlessly in gangster wars, Dirty Max had won an incontestably notorious reputation. Having no one to defend him and no godfather of the gangs who would supply a craved-for gangster identity, he would be targeted by commons and gangsters alike. His torn, faded jeans, blackening nails, knuckles ruined with trick-opening bolstered lockers, and his worn features spoke of unspoken shadows of his personality. He tried to pivot the black hole inside him through a number of different yearnings that never found a Messiah. He tried to strike up some best friendship that would see him through time and tide, but the more he tried to get out of his slovenly hole, the more he was pushed into the marshy, gritty mud of his nameless origin. He even fell in love with a funky gal residing in the slum street nook, but she brushed him aside with a "buzz off toad!", and rushed off before he could plead his case. He was supposedly a parasite, a contagion to be avoided at all costs. He seemed the indiscriminate target of all sadistic urges__ biases, enmities, hostilities__ all atrocities anyone could ever think of.

Initially, he had this inevitable habit of snapping off from reality and withdrawing into the escapist world of his imagination where unfulfilled fantasies found catharsis. He was on cloud nine in his fancies__ the street guys hailing him as top gangster, the cops regarding him as a thrifty catch, his dream gal giving him a satiating smooch__ but reality hit him hard. Time caught up with him in the most abominable of ways. He reached his mid-thirties,

without realizing any of his dreams.... Time trickled on, tired lines appeared around his eyes, and he trudged with heavy steps towards his shack every evening, aware of his failed existence. His life was like a shredded garment, a jigsaw puzzle he couldn't expect to make sense of. The leaden weight on his heart increased with pounding intensity, as he painfully became aware that the origin of the void was in his own heart.

Dirty Max woke up with a deep, heart-rending sigh as usual. Why was his reality always worse than his nightmares? Couldn't he be born again, or perhaps raised again in responsible hands in a better way, not in the irresponsibly random hands of fate? He heard his heart's cry, but the cry suddenly became tangible, tangible because his sensory register could hear the cry. He was slightly puzzled at first at the proximity of the cry. Was his heart voicing its pain with such intensity or was it his infantile cry of being born again? He was wrestling with the urge to either cry or break into helpless laughter.

The dilemma was resolved. On the dust heap right next to his shack was lying a puny baby. He looked at the child with disbelief, as if looking at his past with horror. Should he dispatch the baby like a banana peel just like its mother did? Should he look for her? Or should he advertise like sensible people did? Maybe, he could look for someone who could make the baby as insane as the slum inhabitants. He smiled a bitter smile and drowned in his queries. But the baby wouldn't let him. It again let out a piercing wail, a piercing that even shattered the silence of his void.

Max extended his bony hands towards the baby as an amateur who handles an instrument about to display its introductory notes. His tentative touch felt the baby at last and he lifted it like a rock. But the rock was alive. He gaped open-

mouthed at life, at the puny creation that miled and puked in his arms. He thought of smashing the tender skull on the pebbles lying nearby__ to end miserable life. To prevent it spreading like an unchecked plague.

He couldn't do it. His breath came out in a whoosh. That's it. Just find out the little brat's mother. Get rid of him. He got up and walked with quick steps in the morning air. But the baby's wailing conveyed to him that it__no, he was hungry. The baby was a boy. It felt good to touch the baby, to feel life...and its needs. What should he do to feed the baby before he dies, relinquishing the feeble fibre of life. Naturally, his first instinct was to look for milk. He requested a peasant woman for milk. After a bit of hesitation punctuated by suspicious eyes, she handed him a pitcher of milk. The baby was properly quenched of its yearning.

As the baby consumed the milk in tiny gulps, Dirty Max watched it with bitter, yet thoughtful eyes. Should he own him, assert his belonging, make him a gangster like himself? Should he become a trainer of a tiny life that would grow into a giant beanstalk of revenge, revenge against these sadistic vultures who cornered him into the compromising position that he was entrenched in today? His eyes gained a vicious sparkle and his revengeful flame leapt with joy. Yes, he had got the perfect instrument for revenge.

Dirty Max began his training right from the start. He wanted to make the child tough, to face all hardships with a stony face, and at the same time, never to let anyone take undue advantage of him. But sometimes, as Max was giving a harsh lashing to the lad for some slackness of purpose, something in the boy's eyes touched him with compassion and he stagnated his

whip. Once the boy said, "hit me pop. I been a bad boy" and Dirty Max burst into tears. This was the first time someone had called him anything except Dirty Max. He softly asked the boy where he had learnt the specific word. The boy told him that everyone called him as having a "Dirty Pop" for a father, and Max mumbled a bitter "ahem". The people had already associated the boy with his dirt and smut.

No. He can't let that be. He would make the boy the reservoir of respect that he never was. He still indulged in petty crimes, but this time for a purpose. He kept this purpose hidden in the deep crevice of his heart, like a private letter folded in the grooves of obscurity. Soon, however, his goals manifested themselves in the brought-up of his kid. The money was invested in getting the boy educated from a local school. Gradually, Dirty Max gave up the paltry crimes as well in an attempt to eclipse his son from the tarnishing impact of someone else's money. He wanted to liberate his son from the slavery of black money. More importantly, he wanted to liberate his son from the tag, "Dirty".

Dirty Max named him as John. Not out of saintly inclinations, but because he liked the appellation. John grew by leaps and bounds, and was successful in his academic endeavors, but pained by the fact that people referred to him as Dirty John. Dirty Max almost got into a fight with one of the labourers who jokingly referred to his son as "Dirty Junior" learning the ropes quite nicely, almost in the insulting gesture of slapping his father's image. Max withheld his passion with difficulty and instead embraced his son warmly in the evening as he returned. He buried this incident in the bitter graveyard of his failures.

John grew into a handsome, sturdy and successful professional, but Dirty Max was pinched again and again as the

needles "Dirty John" hit his ears whenever his son was mentioned. Was the stigma as perpetual as that? He was convulsed with a sense of guilt, but he gulped down this astringent morsel of remorseless fate.

But, this feeling was compensated by the flow of success that made his life fragrant with amends. His son made enough money to enable them to live in a better locality, close to the suburbs of the metropolitan. Dirty Max and John relished the fruits of success together and spent some more years in consolidating their hard-earned accomplishment. Something melted in Max's heart and a honey-like frictionless flow of tranquility quietened his long restless spirit.

One day, Dirty Max and John were caught in a traffic jam in their new automobile, but shared a sunny moment of divulging secrets and exhibiting a freemasonry that found vent in this suspended situation. Suddenly, a pedestrian collapsing on the pavement caught Dirty Max's eye. He was Sam, Max's slum fellow who had often ridiculed him in the past. "Stop John! We have to get Sam!" and the father and son hurried to get Sam to the nearest hospital for recovery from a heat stroke. Max held Sam's hand thoughtfully throughout, not flinching for a moment from the wave of acrid memories that stormed his mind.

Dirty Max and John carried Sam safely to his abode. Sam had already given news to the community of his return. They were waiting there, partly out of compassion for Sam and partly out of the curiosity for Dirty Max's lot. They gaped in open admiration at the automobile owned by John, and a group called out in a chorus, "Dirty Max and Dirty John! The Dirties have made the day, eh!!". Max was surprised at the sensation he registered. Instead of a pang of pain or guilt, he felt a thrill of being acknowledged, being

identified. The word “Dirty” felt like a garland, a decorative label that finally embraced them in a circle of self-sufficient glorification. “Dirty indeed son! Ha! And to think I was frightened of it!” Max engulfed his son in a tight bear hug, with his son’s face reflecting a long-lost primrose path of glory.

Pran Neville and My Residential Area

Muhammad Ali

I happen to be a citizen of Lahore. The place where I reside is Sant Nagar. It is also known as Sunnat Nagar, since some people are not ready to accept the fact that the place where they belong to is named after a Hindi language word. Therefore, they have converted the prefix “Sant” into “Sunnat”, without any guarantee of whether the sunnah (way) of the Prophet will be followed in the real sense or not. However, we better not go into the depth of this matter, for this intolerant attitude is not one-sided. A few days back, Nandita Das, an internationally recognized actress of India as well as a social activist, had shared an article on her Facebook page written by Shoaib Daniyal, which told that VK Singh, the minister of state for external affairs of India has demanded that the name of Akbar Road of Delhi be changed to Maharana Pratap Singh Road.

Sant Nagar, or Sunnat Nagar, is not what one can call a posh area. It is not a slum either. It lies between both. Where educated husbands and wives attired gracefully are found heading towards their workplaces every morning, there, at the same time exist illiterate couples who are bent upon expanding their families every year. While some children daily go to school and return exhausted at the time of noon, some are found squatting all day to play marbles and also risking their lives with firecrackers on holy nights. Alongwith a branch of each expensive bakery, one finds at the corner of every street of Sant Nagar, a general store. In not so unclean alleys, there stand houses built in accordance with the latest trends in architecture. There dwell people who alight from rickshaws a few steps from their homes, and there live tycoons

who, since they live in comparatively wider streets, are seen parking their cars in garages.

What is attractive about Sant Nagar are some of its time-stricken houses which are beautifully built and are a reflection of the old times in which they were constructed, because on almost all the facades of these houses, Hindi language has been carved, incomprehensible for the likes of me, and therefore, arousing curiosity. These houses are also characterized by their protruding balconies, on the parapets of which women in the art movies of the subcontinent are found spreading clothes in order to dry. These houses always attracted me, since it has been more than fifteen years that I have been living here, but never did I know the years in which they were built, until I came across Pran Neville's book *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey*. Pran Neville, an author of Indian art and culture, a former student of my university, and a lover of Lahore happened to launch the revised edition of his aforementioned book at Government College University's auditorium. After having listened to what he had to say regarding the book, when the students and teachers were walking out of the auditorium, a small stall stood waiting for them from where they could buy the book, the launching ceremony of which they had attended. Alongwith some of my friends, I bought it, but unfortunately was not able to get it signed by Mr. Neville.

However, I brought it home and was skimming through its pages in order to find a piece on his student life, when my eyes caught sight of the following lines:

“By the early 1930s, Lahore, with its growing prosperity and economic activity, had expanded in all directions. New residential areas were developed in different parts of the city, such as Krishan Nagar, Sant Nagar, Ram Nagar, Ram gullies, Krishna gullies,

Gowalmandi, Gandhi Square, Nisbet Road, Mozang and Quila Gujar Singh.”

These lines made me recall the carvings I had been observing since childhood. Thanks to Pran Neville, those I came to know are seventy-five to eighty years old. Since Mr. Neville said that back in those times, Lahore was prospering economically, I wondered what my area would have been like. I wondered about those affluent families, who would have arrived here and constructed well-built ‘haveli’ like houses in which people still dwell. Well-built, I have said because even after almost a century, those houses, though with scraped walls, stand. Sant Nagar would have been a neat, clean, less populated area belonging to rich people who constructed their massive houses in the times of growing economic prosperity. Since its old name tells us that it solely belonged to the Hindus, there would have been uniformity in its architecture. All the houses would have been of the same sort, the sort discussed above comprising of Hindi language carvings.

Krishan Nagar, a bazar now, is a few kilometers ahead of Sant Nagar. Krishan Nagar is characterized by small, contiguously built shops fraught with their respective stuff. When Krishan Nagar comes to telling about its being a post-colonial subject, it does so by making the visitors raise their eyes to the top of every building. The upper portions are built in the same way as the aforementioned old houses of Sant Nagar, while the lower portions have been renovated according to modern styles. Most probably, residents living above have rented the lower portions to shopkeepers. A varying culture is not visible in different sorts of buildings, but makes itself conspicuous in a single building. Halves of what people built many years back have remained.

Now that the names of the areas have started to change, and the houses are being moulded into newer styles gradually, it is feared that in the coming days, these houses might be made to collapse completely. The renovation of houses is still, not a great deal, since a lot of years have passed from the times of the partition of Hindus and Muslims, but the changing of names reflects an intolerant attitude, depicting that even after so many years, the two groups have not progressed and are still focusing on their animosity and are devising ways to make it even bitter. If this keeps on happening, nothing may remain of the past of Sant Nagar or Krishan Nagar. It is only due to the likes of Pran Neville, who venerate art and culture that people get to know a little about their roots, like I got to know about the place where I had been residing since childhood. The level of intolerance of people, who are unlike the artists, must not rise to such an extent so as to completely abolish each and every sign of something old, for people will not be left with a past to be proud of, for according to Faiz Ahmad Faiz, culture must be territorial as well as historical.

Let's pray that some remnants remain to tell histories, whether interesting or not. Let's pray that a little bit of tolerance remains, as well as love, like Gulzar says:

Aankhon ko visa nahi lagta

Khwaabon ki sarhad hoti nahi

Band aankhon se roz mein sarhad paar chala jata hun milne

Mehdi Hassan se

Nazar mein rehte ho jab tum nazar nahi aate

Ye sur bulaate hain jab tum idhar nahi aate

In lakeeron ko zameen hi pe rehne do

Dilon pe mat utaaro

Translation: There is no visa stipulated for the eyes
No boundary for dreams
With closed eyes, I travel across the border everyday
to meet...

Mehdi Hassan.

You stay in my vision even when I can't see you
These melodies call you when you don't come here
Let these traces of lines stay on the ground,
Don't let them descend upon your hearts.

Poems

An Afternoon Reverie

Sara Khan

Bragging about beauty while the trail
Led into lonely, greenish chasm,
Punctuated with playful stepping stones...

One

Two

Three

And the pumping heart is hurt with love-
The ache. To hop from the side, hooking its claws
To the throat. Aches there lying and thumping,
Sighing to click open feet enough to paddle,
Through ruts
And dusty paths. Envelop the dust in its thick brave folds.

Did you just pop your pimple! Yuck the green mess!

It is flowing to the rug

In a never-ending trail. It's sticky

And it's awfully stinky
damn you. O it will never go to rest,
This wound is the pulsating hub,
The huge green deluge will take over my doorways,
Windows and wet my rugs and clog in the corners-
Weeks of washing wouldn't erase the stench,
Poised in the corner shafts. The cherubin's naughty, plaster of
Paris laugh
Hovering all over my head
It's half-clumsy, half-frightening curvy cheeks
Resemble a hooker's bum I passed by back from work.

Well I would paint you a pale, gauzy, bronze tousled maid
To complete the scene. Right in the middle, or slightly tilted to left.
She is a fine mixture of clever and shy.
Should I call it coy?
Flailing arms, flowing mane, purple-mouthed among the trees.
A wolf in hiding-Helen of Troy!
Beauty, art, ugly, bloodbath, WAR.

Love is sold in the Gloria Jeans' sugar sachets

Optional and complimentary

and I scooped up

A handful to keep me company.

But the last time I turned to them they were scuffling

Angered enough to slay the beauty. Nosing around

In my shirt sleeves, creases of my night-gown

Dark as the veil of night. I put away my pins

Let loose my hair and stretched my limbs.

The day's been long.

Rendezvous

Sumbal Maqsood

I walked around with my heart garrisoned,
Knowing that it could shatter, it could reel
Neither had my heart strings so importuned,
That it could invite its unstrung chords to inadvertently feel.
Fusty was the mechanism of the heart, drained indeed
By draughts of pragmatism haunting its compass.
Since I had a will so well-governed by my creed,
Assumption was that it was invulnerable to trespass.
But strewn are so shrewdly life's pitfalls in the matters of love,
That time can scarce cuckold destiny's watchful eye,
And unwittingly like a sought-after young dove,
I would kiss my celibacy reluctantly goodbye,
Larded with spokes of possibilities is destiny's wheel,
Where one may jilt and dodge, but never delay
And must fall a prey to the heart's Achilles' heel,
Which is to rot resolution in gambol and play,
Thus opened my heart's casement one opportune fairy moment,

And chaos was unleashed in my unguarded wanton blood,
All resistance and promises of strength are superfluous ferment,
For the release of antiquity and obsolete love in relentless flood.

So rate what you may the amorous antics of the world,
For someone, somewhere, love's reality is unfurled.

Exceptions
Muhammad Ali

Not all faces are meant for smiling
Not all eyes are meant for shining

Not all seasons are meant to be relished
Autumn prolongs for whose beloved has perished

Not all flowers with dewdrops glitter
A gust of wind and their petals wither

Not all birds are meant for flying
In cages are some, all set for buying

Not all relations are meant to form
Victims they become, of conventional norms

Not all heart's tales are meant to be revealed
Required is an eye that can read the concealed

A Wired Bird

Ali Akhtar Butt

Aurora Borealis

Within me is now a creature without this massive word and the electric blue sky.

I'm stuck in time, and the PVC pipe. I'm a flying saucer electrocuted.

Made of false-flesh.

“Cannot sustain, cannot sustain!”

“Tutti frutti, times up. The flesh is insecure, childish mockery a red ruby-cure.

This insurance is unpaid. And I deadly maintain, the reputation that never came.”

I died.

Half hanging by the wire like a star, charcoal black. Mocking life. I snakingly-stitch my dreams

for another

Waking life.

The Silent Departurinks

Ali Akhtar Butt

Target killing and two Sun-bullets for Sabri's
 Straight head fell in my bubbling red free heart.
 Stumbling mom, schizophrenic de-departure.
 And a big full stop.
 Breathing and White in color.

This blackening boring
 Heart. The culture curates in me a
 Musical museumatic murmur.

Create 5-7-5 Haiku, why not?
 Create 14 creatures of sonnets, why now?
 Create another Tracy, why him?

Another opus corpus of purplish-dreams.
 Why not? Why now? Why this?
 Your grey matter is turning blue.
 Me and my hair, golden brown too.

This, a sweetening departure.
 "Is needed", said the former gun shot
 That punctured my heart twice, my soul
 Thrice and the cap that had silver-molten holes. Both talk.

In it. I laughed. Did you?
 The silent departure stinks.
 But is there. It exits. It is rainbow cultured

Framed in my past.

On a pirate ship of Ito and Musk, and never ending
Facebook videos.

Translate my life into a black king Indian cobra
Or in another white delight. Delicate. There. Me. And poisonous.

I heard two manga characters eating minty-mangoes.
"Draculian carriage awaits, hey! Come on board"
The silence calls in Heaney's dark drop.
A-final-freedom-fly.

Jump my dear Pink.

Book Reviews

Lifelines: Women's World Uncovered in English

Nasrin Pervin

Lifelines is a collection of 15 short stories written by different authors and compiled and edited by Farah Ghuznavi. Her introduction in the back flap of the cover describes her as writer and newspaper columnist whose work has been published in the UK, US, Canada, India and Bangladesh. This work had been highly recommended in the Commonwealth short story competition.

The Introduction section of the book covers quite a bit on the reviews of the stories, and one approaches the book with certain anticipation. One's reaction is that of soothing discoveries responding to the level of talents incorporated by these writers.

In *Bookends* by Munize Manzur, the story is narrated through e-mail exchanges between two lost loves after 25 years. Through respective monologues, they reveal the stories of their love, disillusionment and dissolution. The female character shines out as the solid one over her male dissolute counterpart as the story progress with a startling discovery at the tail end.

This twist in the tail discovery or realisation is inundated throughout the stories, some of which have a Maupassant-like savoury zest. In *Table for Three* by Shazia Omar, the inner reflection is narrated by two protagonists, the daughter and mother-in-law.

In *Touch Me Not* by S.Bari, the story is narrated through the experience of a boy growing up in a small town in Bangladesh

where a young American woman came to live with her family to do her voluntary work. The woman had to leave the town abruptly as there was a hint of her being assaulted. The boy, when grown up, came up to her again, as she was a politician on the rise in her American home town and together, they revisited her days. They held no bitterness but shared a silent grief between them. The name of the story comes from the translation of lajjabati plant, as is found in an encyclopaedia.

Mehendi Dreams by Lari S. Khan is of about 600 words or so, and about aches of being a dark-skinned female at whom friends and family look at with pity. *Be* (Alizeh Ahmed) is of lesser words, narrated in first person, as the protagonist steps on to the disco floor without a dancing partner shaking off her inhibition.

Daydreams by Sadaf Saaz Siddiqi has a simple storyline, that of what we hear every day. An orphaned village girl falls in love with a man who later denies her and her desire for fatherhood of their baby. NGO's intervention and DNA test brings the man to the altar, but do they live happily ever after? It has a fairy tale ending though when you compare it to newspaper stories where such unions lead to further complications provoked by the trapped husband that compels the girl to commit suicide, get killed or sold to brothels. Happy feeling glows within her when, after so much struggle, she achieves legitimacy for her child. Her elation at the birth comes with the news of her obtaining highest marks in the district exam, and the presence of the unwilling husband fades to irrelevance; it is replaced by the resolve to face the future, as her dreams dawn.

Rubaiyat Khan has an impressive résumé for literary work in English, yet her *Rida* falls short, in having readers working hard to find clues to the various knots that have injudiciously been put in

places. A young girl, brought up in Mirpur, who was married off to a migrant worker, comes back to Mirpur to live with aging parents after the marriage failed and to abort her unborn baby. The language aptly describes her numbness in feeling and aridity but the rest is probably superfluous, hence kept nebulous, to an imperceptible inkling of naming of the story.

In comparison, the theme in *Getting There* (Farah Ghuznavi) is just about it: getting there. No matter how out-moded the leitmotif has become, it blooms still in the mind-set of the ex-development worker who described her struggle for emancipation in the overtly patriarchal environment in which she grew up through a dialogue with her daughter.

In *Over and Over Again* (Tisa Muhaddes), the protagonist, a now grown-up young woman, hints obliquely to poetic justice when she witnesses her childhood time molester snivelling over the framed photograph of his just dead nine-year-old daughter.

Wax Doll by Abeer Haque is about the trepidation and exhilaration of a US brought up returnee in the search of a groom in the home country. It describes how the difference between a traditional arranged marriage and 'boy meet girl' western-mode love marriage is fast fading, in the upper middle crest of the society residing in the posh part of the city. She feels the same shiver and excitement in the slightest of physical intimacy with boys in the private house party, as one should have in the floors of discotheques in an American city.

Pepsi (Sharbari Ahmed) is about missing of childhood under the parentage of jet-setting and often absentee UN staff posted in the suburbia of Mombasa and the craving the company of not so

privileged, yet apparently happy children, in the neighbouring slums, in the midst of her boredom filled affluent existence.

In *Yellow Cab* by Srabonti Narmeen Ali, a Bangladeshi boy making good in America through the Harvard route hits the bottom post 9/11 time in New York city where he ends up driving taxi. He meets his ex-colleague and campus mates as his passengers, relieved that they do not recognise him, but by accident picks up one of his exes, also a 'deshi'. She listens to him and proposes to rekindle their affair despite his fall from grace that brings a breath of fresh air in his now uninhabited existence as a cab driver.

In *Something Fishy* (Sabrina Fatma Ahmad), a western educated embarked on a career at a law firm, experiences travesty of the justice system but finds that her unspoken disenchantment doesn't go unnoticed by a male colleague. As she reads his text message, she is 'chilled by a sinking feeling in her stomach'. As she tries to escape, to the present arrangement of cosiness and companionship of her flatmates, as it seems, in her stay in the suburb of Vancouver, she contemplates the back-to-reality life in Bangladesh.

Teacher Shortage touches the nerves of domestic violence to women seen through the eyes of neighbouring children. It is an ice-cold reflection of the culture of raw male dominance, and the way it is endured, by the lack of practical support from those who are least expected to turn their faces away. The powerlessness of the victim is conjured up in the victim's feeble expression of hope that school will provide her with an accommodation soon. She disappears with her children forever, when she is turned down for a shelter by the family she knew. Society's collective charade and timidity in the face of adversity befalling on an unfortunate victim

is a testament of our time and society where these go on unabated through generations.

Shabnam Nadiya narrates the story with fine details. She tries to avoid a conversation 'looking at the lace border of the tray cloth on which the gold-trimmed cups rested..... trying to follow the intricate mesh of white cotton thread'(3). She knows 'it was crocheted lace; I had seen my grandmother crochet'. She imagines 'a pair of blue-veined old hands busy, busy, busy, with a sharp needle pushing and pulling its way through this white stuff' (3). When her friend tries to say something, she 'opened her mouth.... her flat lips parting like those of blowfish ready to gulp some more air'(4). When the distraught victim came to their house, she 'flopped down (the chair) with the unboned grace of a doll'. Her request for shelter for a few days: 'the words sounded hollow, as if emerging from cavernous depth' (14).

I could go on, but my point addresses a social peril facing women with articulated sympathy, and literarily written 'by a woman, for women and of women'.

Short biographies of the writers at the back pages highlight educational and literary achievements of the writers. Quite a number of them have done courses on Creative Writings and most of them have western education at higher levels. One gets the feeling that PMM is a shared attribute here: as Privileged, Middle-Class and Migrated.

As is the problem of women of this society, their exposure to the realism is in a lot of ways restricted. The principal reason is that often their placement in the strata of the society is determined either by accident of birth or their skin colour and perceived beauty. Women's talents tend to develop as compensatory

elements, proportionate to the privation in these two areas and this dearth in the exposure can be seen in the chosen world of the stories that have been explored.

The book is published by Zubaan, an independent and feminist publishing house based in New Delhi which should be thanked for illuminating the world with this book, as not many of this kind are available.

Elif Shafak's *Honour* and Magic Realism

Muhammad Ali

Elif Shafak, a Turkish writer of the modern times, and someone who believes that authors must not necessarily be representatives of their respective nations and must go beyond themselves while writing, partially succumbs to the wishes of critics in her novel *Honour*, for in it, she discusses the miseries of eastern simpletons married to men living in foreign countries as well as honour killing, the latter being an act commonly associated with eastern countries.

The story revolves around twin sisters Pembe and Jamila hailing from Turkey. Though very close to her twin sister, Pembe flees to London with her sister's lover out of wanderlust, and there, she is abandoned by her husband who gets involved in gambling and leaves his family for another woman. Pembe, during her husband's absence, falls for another man, and is consequently declared a shameless woman. In order to save the family's honour, her eldest son attempts to murder her, but in the act, mistakes his mother's twin sister Jamila for Pembe who for the time being has come to London to pay a visit to her sister, and kills the wrong person. Pembe, however, dies a natural death later on.

Besides being a representative of Turkish people and their values, the novel is rendered all the more interesting by the implementation of dreams, fairy-tale like descriptions, different narratives and skillful time shifts. Although magic realism is found in almost all the works of Elif Shafak, it has been extensively used in *Honour*. For instance, the protagonist Pembe's story is told to us through a number of narratives. At times, the writer makes use of omniscient narrative and tells us the story of Pembe. She holds the readers' hands and through an adept manner of using time shifts, makes them walk through the streets of Turkey, where they

witness Pembe's childhood, and also through the Victoria Park of London, where the readers see Pembe's marital life. At times, Pembe's daughter, Esma reveals to us through first person narrative, her mother's story. In order to make things mysterious and complicated, another characteristic of magic realism, Esma mentions off and on at the start of the story that her mother was killed, but does not reveal the apparent murderer, who in the proceeding chapters, introduces himself by making use of the first-person narrative like Esma. Moreover, he tells the story in the form of a written diary. This person is Iskendar, Pembe's eldest son. Besides, it is through the chapters discussing Yunus, Pembe's third and youngest child that we get to know of Pembe's relation with another man.

Apart from these convoluted narratives, what makes the novel a fine example of magic realism, are the seemingly magical incidents related to Pembe's children. While Shafak describes their birth and naming process, she skillfully amalgamates reality with fantasy. For example, we are told that when Pembe gives birth to her first son, she fears her mother's evil eye of never being able to give birth to a boy. Her mother's gaze has been described as existing everywhere, even in grains and nuts. This provides an element of horror to the story. A dream has also been used by the author at this point in the story. At the time of Iskander's birth, Pembe dreams of hands descending from the sky, pulling out her baby from her womb and dropping him into water surrounding her. This dream is related with the story in the way that as Pembe's life proceeds, Iskander turns out to be the child most aloof from her. However, fantastic descriptions continue to permeate this part of the story, for out of the fear of Izrael, who according to Islamic beliefs is the angel of death, Pembe does not name her son. This matter is solved by three wise men, as if from a fairy tale, who

decide that the person to cross a specific river would name the boy. That person again turns out to be character more like a witch from a horror story, a woman with an aquiline nose and crooked teeth. Like a magical story, she reads water in her palm and prophesies that Iskander would break Pembe's heart to pieces. This again, is related to the realistic part of the story, since in the future, Iskander attempts to murder his mother and mistakenly kills her dear sister. However, the woman names him after the invincible commander, Alexander the Great.

Pembe's third child, Yunus is also named in the story after Jonah, a prophet from Islamic beliefs who was put into a whale's mouth for a mistake he committed.

Apart from such references from mythological beliefs and fairy-tale like incidents, the novel is made beautiful by dreamy descriptions of certain things. For example, the place where Jamila stays after Pembe's abandonment has been described as a mysterious place with its rocks looking like petrified giants and having legends concealing stories of forbidden love. At another point, Pembe's husband finds his new beloved's eyes like blue sapphires, with which if someone saw you, you were supposed to run back home and burn salt on stove.

To sum things up, we see that when it comes to the juxtaposition of fantasy with reality, Elif Shafak does it in a very adept manner. Like a mother who gives equal attention to all her children, Shafak keeps all parts and time shifts of her story well-connected with each other and does not seem to be losing string anywhere. Although Elif Shafak's works are not included in the literary canon, in order to know how the term 'magic realism' is implemented in a work, her writings are the best to peruse.