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Editor's Note

Journal of Linguistics and Language Studies (JLLS)

It is with great pleasure and a renewed commitment to academic excellence that we present the first issue of the second volume of the *Journal of Linguistics and Language Studies* (JLLS), published under the auspices of the Department of Linguistics and Language Studies at Government College University Lahore.

This issue presents a range of scholarly inquiries that critically examine power, representation, and resistance across media and literary texts. The contributions explore geopolitical conflict through media discourse, revisit subalternity within postcolonial narratives, and interrogate war, trauma, and historical power structures in contemporary fiction. Feminist and eco-critical perspectives foreground analyses of women's voices, embodiment, and agency in poetry and Pakistani primetime dramas. Collectively, the articles reflect the journal's commitment to interdisciplinary humanities research and critical engagement with pressing socio-cultural concerns.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our editorial board, reviewers, and contributors whose scholarly expertise and tireless efforts continue to shape the quality and academic integrity of this journal. We are equally thankful to the scholars who entrusted JLLS with their work, allowing us to serve as a platform for thoughtful research and innovative perspectives.

As we embark on this new volume, the *Journal of Linguistics and Language Studies* remains committed to fostering an inclusive scholarly space where emerging voices can be amplified, established perspectives can be critically engaged, and the richness of linguistic scholarship can be shared across disciplines and borders.

Welcome to the first issue of Volume II of the *Journal of Linguistics and Language Studies*.

Dr. Muhammad Abdullah

Editor

Journal of Linguistics and Language Studies



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Rivers of Conflict: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Framing of the Indus Waters Treaty in Al Jazeera English during the 2025 Pakistan-India Crisis

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Abstract

This research critically analyses Al Jazeera English's construction of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) during the 2025 Pakistan-India crisis through Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The present research article examines Al Jazeera's five articles, which were published between April to July 2025. During this time the tensions were escalated between India and Pakistan, resulting from India's unilateral move of suspending the treaty. The articles were selected in terms of relatedness of topics, richness of discourse and easy access. The data analysis revealed that Al Jazeera's articles were marked with mobilized metaphors, high modality expressions and active transitivity structures. The articles positioned India as a proactive upper-riparian state and Pakistan as a vulnerable downstream country. Although, the writings in Al Jazeera tended to upload power imbalances and narratives related to war, the articles also included insights from legal and diplomatic experts. These experts offered

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peaceful and official solutions such as utilizing the Permanent Indus Commission and the Permanent Court of Arbitration for a solving the heightened tensions between the two countries. These narratives were meant to make the discussions more balanced and highlighting the importance of the treaty in maintain peace in the region. The findings of the present study reveal that global media doesn't only shape and sometimes reshape public opinions towards some issue of global attention but also actively influence how people and governments perceive and handle transboundary water-related issues.

Keywords: Al Jazeera English, Critical Discourse Analysis, Conflict, Fairclough, Hydropolitics, Indus Water Commission, Indus Water Treaty, Media Framing

Introduction

Water is a basic need for life. It connects us all, but in South Aisa, water has always been a source of conflict between two nuclear powers of the region, i.e., Pakistan and India. The Indus River system serves as a lifeline to both the countries. But it is also a source of conflict for decades, though to resolve these conflicts a peaceful solution of Indus Water Treaty (IWT), was signed under the auspices of the World Bank. This treaty is a comprehensive framework for transboundary water system management. By allocating control of the three eastern rivers i.e., Ravi, Beans, and Sutlej to India and the three western rivers i.e., Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab to Pakistan, the IWT not only ensured a relatively stable mechanism for water sharing and control but also served as a rare example of diplomatic cooperation between otherwise rival neighbors, it has survived multiple wars, skirmishes, and diplomatic breakdowns hence is durable, yet has been drawn into broader political tensions, which define Pakistan-India relations frequently.



In early 2025, these tensions were once again brought to the fore when a standoff along with the line of control (LoC) escalated into a full-blown diplomatic crisis. In response to a terrorist attack in India-Occupied Kashmir, which New Delhi attributed to Pakistan. India initiated steps to review the operational clauses of IWT. Media reports, and Indian government personals suggested that India had expedited infrastructure projects on western rivers and hinted at revisiting long-standing water treaty. Pakistan responded diplomatically but the political rhetoric intensified, the IWT emerged as a crucial point of contention, not mere as a technical agreement, but as a symbol of strategic leverage and national sovereignty.

During this period of geopolitical instability, media attention was significant in portraying the treaty as not only a legal document but also a point of conflict, identity, and an ideological struggle. Media does not intervene in international conflict in a natural manner. It does not simply report information; it builds stories, chooses frames, and elevates certain discourses above others. Through language and representation, media portrays complex matters to global audiences, which in turn affects their understanding and interpretation of them. This is especially important from the perspective of international crises, where the communication strategies, politics, and diplomacy intersect and interweave with media.

In this regard, Al Jazeera English holds a significant place as a news reporting agency that is read around the world. As an international news network, it offers news reporting which is unique from western media. Unlike many other regional and international government-backed news outlets, Al Jazeera presents itself as an independent news agency. It often takes a broader view of international affairs. During times of rising tensions, military escalations and/or diplomatic upheavals in Southern Asia, Al Jazeera's reporting doesn't just inform its readers about the current affairs but also shapes their opinions. It also outlines how world views and



perceives the unfolding events in Southern Asia. Thus, analyzing how Al Jazeera constructed the narrative of IWT during 2025 conflict helps understand the ways in which global media have been involved in the discursive construction of water politics, conflict, power relations, and geopolitics.

For such analyses, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a comprehensive and interdisciplinary methodological framework. Drawn from linguistics, social sciences, and political critique, CDA analyzes the ways in which language constructs, sustains, or contests sociopolitical power systems and ideological assumptions, as a methodology, CDA is helpful in untangling the linguistic and semiotic strategies crafted within media texts to symbolize social actors for scapegoating, sympathy, or normalization of appraisal and interpretation. Due to its emphasis on textual analysis, interdiscursivity, and a socio-political lens, CDA allows scholars to examine and expose concealed ideologies, agendas, asymmetries, and the role of language in maintaining dominant discourses.

Despite a growing body of scholarly writings on water politics or weaponizing, and media framing in South Asia, there remains a noticeable gap in the critical discourse analysis on how the IWT is represented during 2025 conflict and how it was represented in international media. While past studies have explored environmental journalism or security discourse around South Asian rivers, few have sought media coverage of the IWT during specific flashpoints of heightened political tension such as 2025. Furthermore, analyses of non-western global news outlet such as Al Jazeera remains relatively under-explored in this context. The 2025 conflict, with its rapid escalation and IWT-centered rhetoric, presents a unique moment for investigating how international media presented and framed discursively the water conflict to international audiences.



Therefore, the aim of present study is to conduct CDA of Al Jazeera (English) coverage of the IWT during 2025 Pakistan-India conflict. By examining selected news articles, headlines, editorials, and features published on Al Jazeera English website during the peak of the crisis, this study seeks to uncover the discursive strategies, representational practices and ideological positioning reflected in the news employed by Al Jazeera news outlet. In doing so, the analysis will contribute to broader discussion on the role of media in conflict representation and construction, the politicization of water resources and the intersection of media discourse, power dynamics and international relations in South Asia.

Research Objectives

1. What specific linguistics and rhetorical devices does Al Jazeera use to frame the Indus Waters Treaty issue during the 2025 crisis?
2. How are the roles of Pakistan and India constructed in the discourse covering the treaty in Al Jazeera's reporting?
3. What are the Primary ideological messages conveyed through Al Jazeera's coverage of the Indus Waters Treaty dispute?

Literature Review

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), brokered by the World Bank in 1960, is widely recognized as a cornerstone of Indo-Pakistani diplomacy and a model of successful transboundary water governance. It divided control over six rivers in the Indus Basin: India was allocated the eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej), while Pakistan was given the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) (Akram, 2025; Kamran et al., 2017). The treaty also established the



Permanent Indus Commission to manage disputes and foster bilateral dialogue an innovation that has helped maintain peaceful water-sharing even during periods of war (Naseer, 2024).

Recent literature emphasizes that the treaty's endurance through decades of military and political conflict makes it a unique case study in international law and transnational hydro-politics (Rahman, 2024). However, in the context of rising water insecurity, climate change, and unilateral infrastructure projects, scholars argue that the IWT is under significant strain just like other such transboundary water-systems (Miner et al., 2009; Mohsin et al., 2024). Studies have also pointed out the growing tendency of political actors to frame water as a strategic resource, a shift that introduces securitization into the discourse of water governance (Madouni, 2025; Meissner, 2016).

While several legal and political analyses can be found in existing literature, fewer studies critically evaluated the way media narratives shape public opinions and diplomatic ideologies about the Indus Water Treaty especially during flashpoints (like the one occurred in 2025 Pakistan-India crisis). This lapse points to a gap in the literature concerning discourse construction related to international water conflicts and the role of global media in influencing these discourses.

Media framing theory suggests that the way issues and notions are presented in the media affects how audiences interpret them (Entman, 1993). During international conflicts, news and media outlets construct narratives through selective emphasis, lexical choices, and sometimes propaganda thus influencing public perception and even policy outcomes (Tumber et al., 2006). In South Asian contexts, media often adopt polarized representations, portraying one nation as an aggressor and the other as a victim (Thankachan et al., 2025)



International media outlets like Al Jazeera English, however, bring a transnational perspective, often challenging mainstream Western narratives. While scholars such as Golan et al. (2010) have looked into media's role in global coverage in today's world and Seib (2008), discussed Al Jazeera effect particularly from the perspective of Middle East, there is a paucity of literature examining its framing of South Asian conflicts with regard to resource diplomacy including water treaties. This lack of attention makes Al Jazeera's reporting on the 2025 Indus Waters dispute a rich source for discourse analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical and methodological approach in research that is most widely used to analyze and understand the dynamics and interactions between language, ideology and power (Al-Dadri et al., 2022). Texts and discourses are analyzed in CDA to identify the dynamics such as how social power, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted in societies (Shandy, 2021). We all know how powerful role discourses play in the creation, maintenance and justification of oppressive systems and societal injustices (Van Leeuwen, 2009), to uncover these CDA plays a pivotal role. One of the most important purpose of using CDA is to highlight those discourses which try to suppress disagreement to injustices and popularize dominant ideologies (even if they are not on the right side) (Burlon, 2021).

CDA is used in multiple disciplines as a methodological framework, such as, but not limited to, political rhetoric (Al-Mamoni et al., 2017), media studies (Steele, 2018), advertisements (Hussain et., 2020), and educational and health studies (Lupton, 1992; Porsanger, 2020). CDA is also used in social media and digital technologies to uncover power dynamics and distributions (Brock, 2018, Sweeney et al., 2014).



Scholars such as Van Dijk (1993) and Fairclough (1993) emphasize the importance of CDA in revealing hidden power relations in discourses. They assert that it is a researcher's responsibility to unveil these relationships by applying CDA to the texts, to promote underrepresented voices. CDA is not just a research methodology in social sciences but also an instrument of social justice and change (Hickman et al., 2011; Porsanger, 2020).

For the present study the researchers found CDA suitable to analyze Al Jazeera's coverage of the Indus Water Treaty and its violation by India. This methodological framework was considered especially useful because of its interdisciplinary orientation and political suitability. CDA provides a robust framework for analyzing media texts that involve international relations, treaties, regional and ideological conflicts. Few studies have examined, using CDA, how media outlets have discussed the narratives about the 2025 India-Pakistan conflicts, IWT, legal and diplomatic aspects related to the treaty. Even few studies have discussed the Al Jazeera's representation of the water conflicts between India and Pakistan during 2025. Therefore, the present study tries to fill the gap in the literature and advance research in the domain of transboundary water conflicts using CDA.

Research Methodology

This qualitative investigation employs a Critical Discourse (CDA) framework based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1993) to analyze the media construction of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in Al Jazeera English during the 2025 Pakistan-India crisis. CDA offers a comprehensive analytical tool for investigating language, ideology, and power intersections within media discourse, especially across conflict-ridden geopolitics such as the transboundary water issues with Pakistan and India. Fairclough's three-dimensional model provides three levels of analysis: the textual (analysis of linguistics features), the discursive practice (analysis of how



texts are made and consumed), and the social practice (account of the sociopolitical contexts and ideologies in and through discourse). This model was chosen to explore how Al Jazeera English's representations can create, reinforce, or resist power asymmetries between India and Pakistan across transboundary water resources.

The data consists of five Al Jazeera English news and feature articles between April and July 2025, a period when relations between the two nations deteriorated diplomatically and militarily due to India's threats of suspension of the treaty. Articles were sampled using purposive sampling technique from the relevant inclusion criteria: they must refer explicitly to the Indus Waters Treaty in the context of the 2025 crisis, have been published in English on Al Jazeera's official site, and be publicly available. Prioritization was given to choosing texts that had substantive discursive content, political pronouncements, expert commentary, and historical allusions appropriate for close linguistic and ideological scrutiny. In the current study, both news reports and features were included to cover a wide range of ideas and editorial voices.

The first step of the analysis of news reports was familiarization with the data by close reading, identifying important vocabulary items, and metaphors. The researchers also highlighted the use of transitivity, modality, and structures of headlines for better understanding of the data. The social and discursive aspects were examined through patterns of source selection, intertextual allusions, and constructions of national identity and geopolitical power. The analytical process was performed manually to maintain interpretive richness and thematic depth. As all texts were available publicly and no human participants were engaged, ethical permission was unnecessary. Nevertheless, all sources have been properly referenced and cited in accordance with scholarly norms.



Following news reports were sampled using purposive sampling:

Sr. No.	News Report (headline and URL)	Date of Publication
1	India says it will ‘never’ restore Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/22/india-sys-it-will-never-restore-indus-waters-treaty-with-pakistan	June 22, 2025
2	Can India stop Pakistan’s river water – and will it spark a new war? https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/7/9/can-india-stop-pakistans-river-water-and-will-it-spark-a-new	July 9, 2025
3	Kashmir attack: Does India’s Indus Water Treaty freeze threaten Pakistan? https://www.aljazeera.com/new/2025/4/24/kashmir-attack-does-indias-indus-waters-treat-freeze-threaten-pakistan	April 24, 2025
4	High risks: Indian attacks in Pakistan raise fears of wider conflict https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/7/high-risks-indian-attacks-in-pakistan-raise-fears-of-wider-conflict	May 7, 2025
5	India and Pakistan agree ceasefire: What does it mean? https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/10/india-and-pakistan-agree-ceasefire-what-does-it-mean	May 10, 2025



Data Analysis, Result and Findings

1. Textual Analysis (Description)

a. Vocabulary & Metaphor

In the textual analysis of the five selected news reports from Al Jazeera English, it was seen that most of the vocabulary and metaphor used by Indian personal were highly militarized, confrontational, aggressive, and emotionally and politically loaded. While Pakistan's response to them was defensive and sometimes reactive too. They rejected the allegations made by Indian yet expressed its resolve not to make any compromise on its security and defense. Rather used formal legalistic tone instead of rhetorical escalation. Let's see the vocabulary and metaphor used in the Al Jazeera news reports one by one:

In the news report wherein, India says it will 'never' restore Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan, the article reports Home Minister Amit Shah's statement: "It will never be restored," Shah told The Times of India... "Pakistan will be starved of water that it has been getting unjustifiably. "The term "starved of water" invokes imagery of deliberate deprivation akin to warfare, reinforcing a combative framing.

Al Jazeera mentioned the role of Indus Commission in holding a powerful position and stopping any armed conflicts between India and Pakistan for many decades by facilitating cooperation between the two states and addressing any conflicts related to Indus Water System.

The feature "Can India stop Pakistan's river water – and will it spark a new war?" repeatedly uses "weaponizing water," describing the situation as an intense conflict. As after India's announcement and threat to stop water, Pakistan's National Security Committee rejected



the “unilateral” move and warned “any diversion of Pakistan’s water is to be treated as an act of war.”

In the same report Al Jazeera also mentioned the three-tier nature of the treaty wherein no single participant may decide to stop the flow of water to other countries unilaterally. The diplomatic channel of Permanent Indus Commission to resolve any Indus Water Treaty disputes is once again mentioned in this article of Al Jazeera to highlight the importance of a logical and legal ways to handle such situations. If the matter still remains unresolved the option to hire a neutral expert under the World Bank’s supervision is available.

Al Jazeera provided another solution if the dispute still remains unresolved, instead of weaponization, the participants may take the matter to Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), which is an intergovernmental body to facilitate arbitration and resolve conflicts between countries.

The news report published on Al Jazeera on April 24, 2025, i.e., “Kashmir attack: Does India’s Indus Water Treaty freeze threaten Pakistan?” quotes India foreign secretary Vikram Misri, “The Indus Waters Treaty will be held in abeyance with immediate effect until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.” This hinted their plans to limit the water flow to Pakistan or suspending the IWT treaty. Though it was not possible for them to do this immediately and unilaterally. As Al Jazeera also quoted a Pakistani lawyer Ahmer Bilal Soofi, “the treaty can only be modified by mutual agreement between the parties.”

Pakistan’s response to the India’s irresponsible act was (as quoted by Al Jazeera), “Pakistan has considered India’s suspension of the Indus Water Treaty.... an’ act of war.” Is a repetition of a militarized metaphor, making the “freeze” an act of aggression. The formal, high-



register vocabulary (“held in abeyance,” “abjures”) makes the legal and political seriousness of the circumstance all the more compelling.

Similarly, the news report “High risks: India attacks in Pakistan raise fears of wider conflict” which was published on May 7, 2025, puts escalation in the foreground through its headline: “Modi government says the attacks under operation “Sindoor” were restrained. But they went beyond anything seen since 1971. “The words “exceeded anything witnessed since 1971” evoke historic precedent (1971 war), adding sensed risk and severity. In this article words such as “nuclear-armed rivals, considerable-restraint, most expensive attacks, surgically-target, precision strikes” etc., were used which were highly charged and hatred-provoking terms.

In the news report on May 10, 2025—” India and Pakistan agree ceasefire: What does it mean?” The instant framing employs modal verbs conveying immediate diplomatic response, “India and Pakistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire after days of military escalation...” Adjectives like “immediate” and “escalation” convey volatility, while juxtaposing both countries indicates a two-way path toward peace, albeit precarious. In this article Al Jazeera also highlighted the international attention to the situations in South Asia and involvement of President Trump in mediating the talks. The use of words such as “common sense, great intelligence” in Trumps social media posts were also highlighted in this report.

While considering the role of Al Jazeera is selection of vocabulary and metaphor in the discourse related to the 2025 conflict between Pakistan and India in selected articles or news reports, it can be seen that Al Jazeera has consistently used words such as “unilateral”, “illegal”, “weaponizing water”, “abeyance” to describe India’s actions and for Pakistan’s response it has used words such as “act of war”, “lifeline”, call for neutral inquiry”, “denial” etc.,. Thus, India as an aggressor and Pakistan as heavily relying on legal experts and vulnerable victim.



b. Modality & Transitivity

In the June article, strong modal expressions convey certainty:

“India will never restore the Indus Waters Treaty....”

Active transitive construction positions India as the powerful subject acting upon Pakistan.

They July feature quotes as expert:

“Water is very politically sensitive.” (Haines)

This neutral framing contrasts sharply with the certainty and aggression of political rhetoric.

As far as the modality is concerned in Al Jazeera English, it resorts to high modality in highlighting the gravitas of Indian actions, the illegitimacy of its position, and the catastrophic implications for Pakistan. Lower modalities are occasionally used when speaking about India’s complete capability to impose its threats or complete certainty of a comprehensive war to enable analysis nuance without losing risk. The repeated use of modality in support of legal assertions (i.e., “cannot be suspended”) reinforces the idea that India is working beyond traditional international norms.

The transitivity choices in Al Jazeera English repeatedly position India as the central Actor of violent, one-sided, or threatening material processes (i.e., “suspend,” “divert,” “strike,” “close”). This assigns blame and responsibility for the escalation to India to a considerable extent.

On the other hand, Pakistan is typically cast as the Recipient or Affected party of Indian behavior (“starve Pakistan of water,” “threaten Pakistan”), or as an Actor committed to reactive or defensive material processes (“denied,” “retaliated,” “warning,” “pursuing legal channels”).



This serves to reinforce the image of Pakistan as an Affected/vulnerable party responding to perceived provocation.

The frequent quotation of verbal processes of “legal experts” and “analysts” enables Al Jazeera English to bring in critical viewpoints and question India’s official explanations, providing platforms for alternative explanations of events and the legality of the IWT. This tactical employment of various ‘sayers’ positionally configures the narrative to be critical of unilateral power.

c. Headlines & Opening Lines

June’s headline, “India says it will ‘never’ restore Indus Waters Treaty...,” directly foregrounds conflict. The lead paragraph states, “India will never restore the Indus Waters Treaty... and the water flowing there will be diverted for internal use...” These are the remarks of Indian Home Minister Amit Shah. These remarks are highly conflict oriented and convey the warmongering stance of India.

The headline of July’s feature stated, “Can India stop Pakistan’s river water – and will it spark a new war?” July’s feature opener frames escalation and risk by relating Saadat Hasan Manto’s short story published decades ago mentioning India’s suspension of water to Pakistan, asserting the idea that Pakistan has always been aware of India’s intentions.

The April news report’s headline was “Kashmir attack: Does India’s Indus Water Treaty freeze threaten Pakistan?” This news headline immediately establishes a cause-and-effect relationship. The Kashmir attack is presented as an impetus for a potential action by India. Though waters had nothing to do with the attacks in India but freezing the IWT treaty was India’s response. The interrogative format / question format of this heading frames this action as



a threat to Pakistan, implying India as a potential aggressor and Pakistan as vulnerable.

Similarly, the opening statement states Pakistan viewing India's act of suspending IWT and shutting down water flow to Pakistan as an act of war, and it reinforces the same dynamic i.e., India as an aggressor and Pakistan as a vulnerable state.

In the May 7th article, the headline used words such as "high risks", "Indian attacks in Pakistan" and "raises fear of wider conflict". The title names India as the aggressor and Pakistan as the garget, immediately framing agency and blame. Overall, the title uses dramatic and crises-oriented language to alert the readers for a serious geopolitical development. The opening lines also validates this claim by adding "Indian armed forces struck nine locations in Pakistan." The use of precision and specificity "nine locations" and use of metaphor intensifies emotional response and constructs a visual of upcoming upheaval.

The analysis of news report of May 10, 2025, suggest that the article's headline use a declarative tone and states a fact that "India and Pakistan agree ceasefire", which is a way to inform the readers about a turning point in the befalling geopolitical situation. But the headline has a sub-title in question format "what does it mean?" which indicates an uncertainty and invites interpretive engagement on readers' part. This headline frames both countries equally which softens the potential blame narrative suggesting a cooperation on the end of both countries.

The starting sentence of the lead paragraph attributes the ceasefire to the statement of US president Trump. The language is restrained and formal suggesting a joint responsibility of both countries and international forces in avoiding the escalating situations. This also suggest the institutional role and negotiation process rather than a sudden development.



From the above discussion, specifically the vocabulary analysis, Al Jazeera English headlines about the Indus Waters Treaty and the 2025 Pakistan-India crisis use deliberate and powerful vocabulary to set the tone. Phrases such as “never,” “spark a new war,” “threaten,” “high risks,” and the opposing “ceasefire” instantaneously transport one to a state of urgency, threat to existence, and risk of all-out conflict. The steady reference to “Indus Waters Treaty” paints the conflict to a particular, essential resource, whereas the direct usage of “Pakistan-India crisis” or “Kashmir attack” situates the hydropolitical contention in a larger-scale geopolitical conflict. This effective lexical decision in headings is designed to attract attention, foreshadow the critical tone of the articles, and immediately convey the severe consequences of the events unfolding.

Al Jazeera English headlines, especially with respect to the Indus Waters Treaty and the 2025 Pakistan-India crisis, are artfully constructed with words that instantly convey urgency, possible disaster, and an adversarial tone. Lexical options such as “never restore,” “spark a new war,” and the interrogative “does threaten Pakistan?” are meant to underpin the deep and possibly irreversible nature of the consequences of India’s actions. The phrase “High risks” immediately signals the increased risk of broader conflict, invoking a sense of international duty and alarm. The later headline declaring a “ceasefire” on the other hand indicates de-escalation, but one that is brought about by outside intervention, thereby tactfully confirming the world involvement as essential narrative. This strategic lexicon not only grabs instant attention but also encapsulates the fundamental themes of legal transgression, existential danger, and geopolitical instability in a few brief words, reiterating Al Jazeera’s steady characterization of the conflict.



2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

a. Source Selection & Attribution

The article published on July 9, 2025, strategically blended voices from multiple sources, such as governmental sources, independent experts, and historical anecdotes to establish source and attribution. For instance, Al Jazeera quoted Amit Shah (Indian home minister), Dan Haines (environmental historian at University College London), Shiraz Memon (former Pakistani representative of Permanent Indus Commission for Pakistan) and Majeed Akhter (senior lecturer at King's college London). By doing so, the article adds analytical depth to the news report and frames Indus water conflict as geopolitical issue and high-stake complex dilemma. In the July feature, Al Jazeera included voices from independent experts as well, such as they quoted Dan Haines. Haines, an environmental historian and author, provided technical perspective of that Indian's abeyance of IWT that it could lead to undermining agriculture in Pakistan. Al Jazeera also pointed out that Pakistan was invoking international legal channels to make its case.

In the article published in June, Amit Shah's statement and his interview to "The Times of India" was quoted as "It will never be restored" and "Pakistan will be starved of water...". These statements dimmed the hope for any negotiations. Al Jazeera mentioned that Pakistan made no response to Shah's statement but it quoted Pakistan's previous stance to such acts of abeyance of treaty as "an act of war". Al Jazeera framed India in the place of initiative-taking, thus demonstrating authority. Pakistan's response ascribing it as an act of war without attributing it to any particular person or official statement, hence its role is of a silent respondent. This is an example of framing where Al Jazeera subtly identifies the agency of both parties without clearly ascribing any title to any one of them. This imbalance is not immediately obvious but can be seen as shaping the perceptions of the readers about the events.



Through such framing and attribution of sources, Al Jazeera, establishes the questions of legality of India's action of unilateral suspension of the IWT. It portrays India's actions as unjustified and cause of rising escalation. By frequently quoting legal experts and giving attention to Pakistan's counter narrative and warnings, its news reports question the legitimacy of India's actions and unilateral move of suspending IWT. It emphasizes the serious humanitarian and geo-political consequences of such acts. This approach fits with Al Jazeera's overall editorial perspective which is projecting voice from the Global South from a realistic perspective and its reporting usually differs from the narratives of Western media.

b. Intertextual References

Sometimes the news reporters cite previous events too in Al Jazeera News articles, for instance in April's news article, the reporter mentioned 2019 when India came close to suspending IWT. Similarly, the reporter also mentioned India's long held stance that terrorist activities on their land is cross-border supported. Another instance of intertextuality is the reporter's mentioning of 1948, when the Standstill Agreement ended and India stopped water flow towards Pakistan, prompting an urgent need for negotiations.

Intertextuality is a prominent feature of media discourse to strengthen the narrative's depth and informing the reader about the historical events. In July's article the reference to Saadat Hassan Manto's short story and the mention of shutting down of water to Pakistan even seven decades ago hints that Pakistan had always been aware of India's intentions.

Al Jazeera English's reports on the Indus Waters Treaty crisis are saturated with intertextual allusions, integrating the immediate situation with a larger perspective of historical,



legal, and geopolitical contexts. This technique is essential in giving richness to the narrative and placing the ongoing crisis within a continuum of previous interactions and existing frameworks.

Most notably, the intertextual reference that stands out first is to the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) itself. The article repeatedly mentions the history of IWT, that it was signed in 1960 and the division of rivers and particularly World Bank's role in brokering the treaty between Pakistan and India. This treaty serves as a founding text of India-Pakistan water relationship. It is also mentioned that the IWT has survived many decades and wars inspite of continuous violations of the agreement by India by threatening, abeyance or stopping the waters' flow to Pakistan.

The articles of Al Jazeera repeatedly discuss the past and present conflicts between India and Pakistan and the diplomatic history of the region. The mentioning of 1948 and 1971 war, the Kargil War of 1999, the skirmishes of 2001-2002 etc., the permanent need of third party (e.g., the USA) arbitration and then the recent weaponization and water hostilities initiated by India. Al Jazeera mentioned all these events multiple times in different articles, features and editorials to bring a clear picture in sight and build intertextual connections. The readers can easily assess the India was the initiator of the hostilities by not only blaming Pakistan for Pahalgam terrorist attack but also weaponizing and targeting innocents in Pakistan though Pakistan was repeatedly denying such accusations.

3. Social Practice (Explanation)

a. Ideological Positioning

The news article published in June constructs a narrative of aggression by highlighting the importance of water and symbolizing it as a national security tool. It used militarized metaphors and strong declarations. India declared that the treaty will not be restored, and the



water will be diverted to Rajasthan (northwestern Indian desert state). This statement was given by Amit Shah (India's federal home minister). Al Jazeera quoted one previous statement by Pakistani foreign minister Ishaq Dar that the treaty cannot be terminated or amended unilaterally. It also cited Ahmer Bilal Soofi (a Pakistani lawyer) who said that there is no such provision to put the treaty in abeyance in IWT and if India does so, it is a clear violation of international laws. These and many other such claims by both parties were discussed in this article of Al Jazeera highlighting the ideology of both nations about the significance and durability of the treaty.

In the feature published in July the analysis and opinions of experts from diplomatic, and judicial backgrounds were used to highlight the importance of diplomatic route to resolve the issue that was turning into ideological confrontation. Al Jazeera's reporting on the IWT crises in 2025 between India and Pakistan brings into light the ideological stances of both countries. It emphasizes the peace of unilateral exercise of power. It is clear that IWT serves as a peace-promoting treaty which keeps a balance of power and provides both countries equal rights over their "lifeline" and prohibits unilateral decisions of stopping water for any one by terminating this treaty illegally. India's statement of putting the treaty in abeyance is essentially illegal and poses existential and security dangers not only for Pakistan but for the whole region. Al Jazeera gives special attention to experts' opinions about the need of peaceful resolution of the crises and importance of sanctity of international treaties and anti-escalation mind-set in maintaining peace in the region.

b. National Power & Identity

The discourse consistently portrays India as the upper-riparian aggressor ("we will take water... Pakistan will be starved") and Pakistan as the vulnerable downstream victim. Pakistan's characterization of the move as an "act of war" positions it as defensively righteous.



The expert's commentary on the political sensitivity of water underscores India's potential to weaponize water as part of its geopolitical leverage.

Al Jazeera English's framing of the Indus Water Treaty conflict precisely builds the national power and identity of India and Pakistan. India is positioned predominantly as the assertive regional power, defined by its unilateral behavior (suspending the treaty, initiating "Operation Sindoor"), its hardline political discourse (Amit Shah's "never restore" proclamation), and its willingness to utilize its upstream geographical position to pressure. This image depicts and Indian identity that is assertive, forceful, and possibly willing to defy global norms in pursuing its own perceived national security goals. Pakistan's identity, on the other hand, is defined by its vulnerability as the lower riparian state, reliant on India for its "lifeline" source of water, and typically portrayed as responding to Indian aggression. Its strength is constructed in terms of legal appeals to international law, threats of dire repercussions such as "water warfare," and its repeated denials of terrorism involvement, thus constructing a national identity that is protective, legally grounded, and fighting for survival against a more dominant neighbor.

c. Implication for Diplomacy & Security

Al Jazeera's report amplifies urgency by presenting both militarized framing and diplomatic voices. This signals that water conflict is both a political weapon and subject to institutional resolution.

By highlighting treaty-based mechanisms (Permanent Indus Commission, PCA), even amidst confrontation, the discourse subtly advocates for legal and diplomatic pathways alongside highlighting the risk of confrontation. Certainly! Below is a formal academic-style draft of



Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion sections based on the CDA analysis of Al Jazeera English's reporting on the Indus Waters Treaty during the 2025 Pakistan-India crisis.

Al Jazeera's coverage of the Indus Waters Treaty dispute has important implications for security and diplomacy across the South Asian region. Though the main focus of their news reports is on India's rhetoric and unilateral policies of blocking water by violating IWT thus committing violations of international law and threatening Pakistan to deprive it of its lifeline i.e., water. These reports also hint that the trust between both parties of IWT is deteriorating and the tensions are growing actively which may malign bilateral diplomatic efforts. The news reports highlighting Pakistan's stance regarding threats of abeyance of IWT as an act of war draw attention to increasing the chances of wider conflict between two nuclear powers. These reports bring the delicate security environment of the region to light.

Water is an essential commodity needed by everyone for everyday needs as well as for agricultural requirements but if India persistently sticks to its stubborn stance and blocks the flow of water coming to Pakistan, this very water could be a main reason of another war between the two countries. Though there has been a ceasefire between the two countries after a few skirmishes, India was not ready for traditional means of dispute settlement such as the PCA and Pakistan's vulnerability was clearly genuine. To achieve a long-lasting peace, a change in India's diplomatic approach and behavior is required. It will also help both the nations to comply with international norms.

Discussion

The analysis presented above shows that Al Jazeera English's news reporting significantly contributes to shaping public opinions not only at national but also at international



level. They presented the events of IWT crises of 2025 through the production of politically charged yet narrative shared by institutions of both countries as well as experts from all around the world. Since Al Jazeera is read in many countries, its news reporting on the escalating India-Pakistan situations played key role in shaping the perceptions of people not only within the two countries involved but also in informing and forming public opinions at the international level. The militarization or weaponizing water in metaphors and modality reinforces the construction of water as a security threat, aligning with the securitization literature in water politics (Imran et al., 2023; Petersen, 2015; Swain, 2024). This framing may contribute to public anxieties and nationalistic sentiments, potentially limiting diplomatic flexibility.

However, the inclusion of expert voices and references to established dispute mechanisms introduces a counter-narrative that suggests institutional resilience and possibilities for peaceful resolution. These findings align with previous researches indicating the durability of the IWT despite political, diplomatic and security crises (Rahman, 2024). This affirms that the treaty has survived even during times of serious political troubles.

The polarized yet balanced sourcing and attribution strategy discloses the media as both the site of negotiation and contestation of meaning in which contradictory national interests and identities are mediated and articulated. The discourse thereby mirrors underlying geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan within an international legal context.

Notably, Al Jazeera through its reporting portrayed India a stronger and initiative taker counterpart of the two countries, while Pakistan as vulnerable lower riparian. However, one could argue that such findings just over-simplify the situations and power dynamics over transboundary water issues. Such portrayals can make it seem as if solely power decides everything and neglecting the importance and role of human agency, adaptation and cooperation.



Therefore, a thoughtful media coverage of ongoing political, social, diplomatic and security related events is required, which should give voice to civil society, environmental experts and local communities along with the bureaucrats, government officials, security and legal experts. It will give a fuller and balanced understanding to the audiences.

Conclusion

The present study is a critical discourse analysis of Al Jazeera English reporting on Pakistan and India conflict during 2025 over Indus Water Treaty, when India unilaterally decided to put IWT in abeyance. Water being the lifeline of the people of both countries, it was a considered a matter of great concern in Pakistan. Five articles from Al Jazeera were selected for analysis in this study. The findings revealed that Al Jazeera used forceful modalities, intertextuality and militarized metaphors in their discourses to present the real picture of the events. The language used by Al Jazeera indicated the geopolitical tensions and power inequalities. At the same time, they also presented expert opinions about the diplomatic mechanisms in the region and the chances of increasing tensions if the transboundary water issues were not resolved diplomatically.

By discussing the discursive mechanisms of one of the most famous media outlets namely Al Jazeera, the present study adds to the research on media, water politics, and conflict discourses. It also highlights the pivotal role of media in shaping, reshaping or changing the opinions of public about diplomatic matters or contests over transboundary water issues.

The future researchers may broaden the scope by examining the discursive and coverage practices of other media outlets and their role in shaping the perceptions of local as well as



global audience. Moreover, interdisciplinary research studies and analysis involving environmental science, politics, geography, and media studies would also hold significant value.



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Locating Spivak's Subaltern in Baaba Sillah's *When the Monkey Talks*:

A Case between Bhubaneswari Bhaduri and Eddu Fara Mundaw

*Momodou Lamin Demba*³

Abstract

The Aku (Krio) people of The Gambia have a maxim that goes, “*When monkey talk, monkey yerri*,” which translates to “When the monkey talks, the monkey hears.” Although this wise old saying denotes the culture of common understanding among members of any homogenous group, Gambianist scholars recode this meaning, and authors such as Baaba Sillah use it to comment on his society’s failure to understand and recognize the sociopolitical role played by the late Gambian statesman, Edward Francis Small. This paper argues that some historical personalities chose outspokenness against colonial and capitalist exploitation in colonial Gambia and as such suffered exclusion and persecution from the colonial establishment. Using the postcolonial perspective, this paper compares the life of Sillah’s Eddu Fara Mundaw (a pseudonym for Edward Francis Small) to Spivak’s Bhubaneswari Bhaduri in “Can the Subaltern Speak.” The paper reveals that while Spivak’s Bhubaneswari used her body through suicide as a text, Sillah’s Mundaw’s life of service symbolized that their people failed to decode their messages. Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, from Spivak’s seminal essay, was a young woman who committed suicide by hanging at a time when she was menstruating. Although she expected her

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people to be able to read and decipher her message (suicide during menstruation) to rule out possibilities of any involvement in an illicit love affair and perhaps pregnancy, it sadly failed to be understood. This paper concludes that the exclusion and futility of the subaltern's speech is akin to the arguments that postcoloniality is pervasive in global scholarship.

Keywords: Subaltern; Postcolonialism; World literature; Capitalism; Edward Francis Small

Introduction

In her introductory section to *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, Rosalind C. Morris (2010) claims that Spivak's 1988 essay has been a respected subject for discussion among academics. However, she goes on to assert that many critics of the said essay have quoted and misquoted the work from the perspective of a passage she wrote, "White men saving brown women from brown men." The passage reference to "saving" is a commentary on the Bengali practice of *sati* (self-immolation). Morris (2010) describes the ritual that the Hindu widow who volunteers to join her deceased husband in death ascends the funeral pyre and immolates herself voluntarily as a sign of loyalty to her deceased husband.

Spivak's essay highlights two impossible suicides: one resides in the accounts about widow sacrifice, a practice of self-immolation called *sati*, and the role of the British imperialist in the abolition of its practice in India. We might gather that Spivak's criticism isn't in support of the practice of widow immolation but suggests that there should be no interference in the practice of freewill nor must it be decreed as a crime by some "well-meaning" outsider who cannot even transcribe the name of the practice. For instance, widow self-immolation, described by some critics as a tool used by patriarchy to deny the widow her rights to inheritance, is erroneously being redefined as a crime and not as patriarchy (Morris, 2010).



The second suicide, and more relevant to this paper, lurks in the almost forgotten story of a young girl, Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, whose suicide in 1926 could not be read or explicated by her people. The story has it that Bhubaneswari Bhaduri was from a metropolitan middle-class Indian family who got involved in the liberation struggle for India. Because she was unable to execute a political assassination, to stain her hands “with blood,” she commits suicide (Morris, 2010). Spivak sees her death, its nature, and its circumstance, as a text she wrote to her people.

Knowing that as a young woman, her suicide could be attributed to having an illicit love affair, Bhubaneswari waited until she was menstruating (proof of her innocence and the absence of pregnancy) to commit suicide (Morris, 2010). In spite of how she presented her innocence, the society passed the “verdict” that she committed suicide for the very same reason she wrote with her body—to protect her integrity even in death. But her text was not read. Bahri (2006, p. 199) would write that “When Bhubaneswari’s nieces are asked about her suicide just some years after her death, they said that it was a case of illicit love.” Morris (2010) interprets this text to question to what degree the historical backgrounds and philosophical configurations of the subaltern group work together to efface any possibility of having the subaltern speech heard.

It is further argued by Morris that Spivak’s definition of subalternity can be seen as more of a challenge than an identity because in subalternity the ability to access power is greatly impeded (Morris, 2010). Spivak (1988) raises similar views, arguing that the voices and struggles of marginalized women in the Global South are often ignored or silenced in Western feminist discourse. Have subaltern groups now been rid of this bane? No. Morris cites the example of USA’s involvement in Afghanistan, that the Afghan war has been interpreted as a moral necessity, in order to protect Afghan women from their men (Morris, 2010). Once again, this reechoes Spivak’s statement of white men saving women of colour from their men.



The above statement implies that Bengali women needed saving from Bengali men even when both the men and women were under the yoke of colonialism. But because it was a patriarchal society, the ideological structure and gender configurations promote male dominance. So within the context of colonialism, the subaltern is deprived of a history and therefore a voice. Furthermore, the situation is worse when a female subaltern is involved.

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (2010), in a chapter titled “Reflection on Can the Subaltern Speak,” alludes to Spivak’s statement on terror after the September 11th attacks. The statement highlights the lessons for the innocent and defenseless suicide bombers, Spivak claims that the objective of their message will never be attained. Like Bhubaneswari, they die with their message because “suicide is always an exceptional death—an impossible phrase” (cited in Morris, 2010, p. 124).

The futility of the endeavor described above is very much akin to the endeavor of Eddu Fara Mundaw, a character that Baaba Sillah featured very well in his maiden novel, *When the Monkey Talks* (2003), and its sequel, *Dabbali Gi* (2010), and *Dreams of the Islands* (2012). But who was Eddu Fara Mundaw, and why did Sillah project him in his novel(s)? In a televised interview on Viewpoint,⁴ and elsewhere in *Baaba Sillah: Reclaiming the Mantle*, a work of critical reviews by Gomez and Fanneh (2015), Sillah claims that Eddu Fara Mundaw or Paa Mundaw⁵ are pseudonyms that he used to represent Edward Francis Small, a key figure in The Gambia’s independence struggle that he (Sillah) and a certain number of Gambianist scholars

⁴ Viewpoint is a weekly TV show on QTV, Gambia. The show is characterized by interviews and panel discussions on current affairs in politics, business, health, education, tourism, transport, sports, arts and culture etc.

⁵ Eddu stands for Edward, Fara stands for Francis and Mundaw is the equivalent Wolof word for small (adjective)



felt has been under-represented and forgotten in Gambian history. He claimed that this phenomenon was made possible because history was told from the perspective of the colonialist. Hence Sillah, in an attempt to rewrite history from a postcolonial viewpoint, restores to Small the honor that he was denied.⁶ Sillah's inclination is better explained in the chapter "Re-placing the text" from Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989).

Similar postcolonial themes could be traced in Sillah's *When the Monkey Talks*. In their section titled "Onomasty in Sillah's Works," Gomez and Fanneh discuss how Sillah uses pseudonyms for his characters. He used, for example, Eddu Fara Mundaw for Edward Francis Small, a twist in the names of places, for example, Galoyaa for Bathurst (now renamed Banjul), and local terms, such as *buur* (the Wolof word for king), *bombolin* (a telegraphic drum), *lempo* (tax), etc. These examples Sillah will use with utmost precision and dexterity, giving his works their postcolonial touch.

In addition to the vocabulary, Sillah uses a transcription quite conspicuous in contrast with colonial autography. This attitude, again, could be perceived as a kind of renaissance, a rebellion, or a naked attempt to break away from the colonial narrative. Such a position is shared with Ashcroft et al. (1989), who argue that postcolonial writers often challenge the dominance of the colonial language and its expressions by purposefully undermining or reconfiguring its meanings, employing strategies such as code-switching and the combination of using indigenous languages to disrupt the colonial linguistic order.

More relevant for the present work perhaps, is Gomez and Fanneh's analysis on Small's involvement in the Gambia's struggle for autonomy. They reason that:

⁶ Gomez and Fanneh: Interview with Baaba Sillah, in *Baaba Sillah: Reclaiming the Mantle*



The emergence of political parties in Kataminaland was among other things, triggered by the establishment of trade unions, media, and pressure groups, whose activities had immense impact on the ways the colonial administration ceded power to Kataminians. Mundaw, the trail-blazer and beacon of hope in the horizon of the journey to independence, inspired prominent politicians like Faye, Jahumpa, Njie and Jawara to complete the journey (Gomez & Fanneh, 2015, p. 177).

Small happened to be among the first set of educated Gambians. His level of education at the time could guarantee him a life of comfort if he had chosen to remain silent or compliant with colonial exploitation (Gomez, 2016). However, Small preferred to make it his life's mission to speak up and speak out against the institution of colonialism to whoever cares to listen. He was a man who sacrificed a life of luxury, or at least comfort, to ignite, among his people, a sense of struggle against colonial rule in The Gambia and elsewhere in Africa.

It must be understood that even at independence, there were doubts regarding the sustainability of The Gambia's independence. The title of Berkley Rice's book, *Enter The Gambia: The Birth of an Improbable Nation*, suggests that even when the new nation felt that the imperial power should leave for Gambians to take charge of their own affairs, colonialist writers, private individuals, and even Gambians alike doubted the possibility of sustainable independence.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on postcolonial theory and two related concepts of subalternity and world literature. This particular theory is believed to provide a common ground for both Spivak's and Sillah's works under discussion, as both have emerged from postcolonial societies.



Additionally, the two concepts used have been found to be more relevant in supporting and putting the discussions into perspective.

Postcolonial theory is a multidisciplinary area that emerged around the mid-20th century and seeks to analyze the legacies and power dynamics of colonialism on formerly colonized societies. Because of its multidisciplinary nature, its meaning is highly contested and attracts a lot of debate. Ashcroft et al. (1989, p. 2), however, define postcolonialism as a “term to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.” It means, therefore, that postcolonialism isn’t just about the period after colonialism but also covers the periods before and during colonialism.

However, postcolonial theory continues to evolve and adapt as scholars engage with contemporary issues and global dynamics. The Orient and the Occident continue to dialogue in their scholarship, keeping the theory alive and engaging all the more through literary works through time and space.

In addition to postcolonial theory, the work also appropriates the concepts of subalternity and world literature. These two concepts have been observed to bear close connections with postcolonial theory. Therefore, they are used to elucidate postcolonial theory in literature and in this present work.

The first of these concepts, subalternity originated within the field of postcolonial studies and was initially developed by the historian and philosopher Antonio Gramsci. “Subaltern,” in any given society, refers to marginalized or oppressed groups who lack political and socio-economic power. This concept has been expanded and elaborated upon by various scholars and theorists (Beverley, 1999).



Subalternity explores the conditions and struggles of those who have been historically silenced from dominant discourse and relegated to the fringes of society. It shows the interconnectedness of social identities and the ways in which these conditions shape our experiences of subordination (Chakrabarty, 1992). Subalternity is often studied and analyzed within the framework of different theoretical approaches, such as postcolonial theory or feminist theory, because these theories provide analytical tools to examine power relations and the construction of knowledge within the context of subaltern groups (Morton, 2007).

Green (2002) posits Antonio Gramsci's concept is foundational to our understanding of subalternity. What we can draw from this view is that Gramsci's concept of the subaltern refers to those who are marginalized, oppressed, and rendered politically powerless. Green argues further that Gramsci's ideas on power relations and cultural production are crucial to understanding subaltern studies. In addition to Gramsci's ideas, Spivak's influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is also viewed as a crucial text within subaltern studies. Spivak's seminal essay examines the challenges of representing and giving voice to subaltern groups within academic discourse while at the same time raising questions about the power dynamics involved in these representations (Riach, 2017).

The term "weltliteratur," or world literature, was coined by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the German scientist, statesman, and author. According to Deckard, Lawrence, & Lazarus (2015), the coinage of the term was premised on the notion that the world is one integrated and unified whole, which leaves out the issue of cultural differences. The concept was initially meant to be an extension of comparative literature, but some later critics like Mufti (2010) regard it as a Eurocentric capitalist agenda that has largely excluded literary works from the Orient.



Moretti (2000) refers to world literature as the idea of literature that transcends national and cultural boundaries to include literary works from various cultures and languages around the world. Moretti argues that though world literature is not a theory, it is commonly associated with certain theoretical perspectives and approaches, such as comparative literature and postcolonial theory. This is because these theories provide a basis for analyzing and interpreting world literature (Mufti, 2010; Damrosch, 2014). Mufti goes further to question if world literature is actually depoliticized, as claimed by Western scholars such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Pascale Casanova.

World literature as a concept recognizes the value of diverse literary traditions and aims to foster cross-cultural understanding and dialogue through the study and appreciation of literature from around the world. The concept challenges the notion of literature as solely belonging to a specific nation or language and encourages a broader, more inclusive understanding of literary works and their significance in a global context (Mufti, 2010; Damrosch, 2014).

Methodology

The paper explores selected themes from *When the Monkey Talks* and relates its findings to the misconstrued message of Bhubaneswari. The two works have an intersection in their message being born out of a character's self-sacrificial role for the betterment of others who remain ignorant, indifferent, or both to the message. Themes discussed in the next section have been selected to facilitate such discussion about the role of Mundaw. Since Spivak's work under discussion forms part of the theoretical and conceptual framework, more reference in the analysis would be reserved for Sillah's work, which is being tested against theory and concepts.



Discussion

In *When the Monkey Talks*, Sillah might have hinted about Mundaw's position against poor colonial taxes when he said, "They insist that we must pay our yard, head, and hut taxes regardless of the outcome of the harvest. Without due notification, they decided to levy the strange farmer's tax on all migrant laborers" (Sillah, 2003, p. 133). Mundaw would advocate against the introduction of money as a means of exchange or against Kataminian participation in the colonial wars (Sillah, 2003, 2010). However, since these themes have been discussed in greater detail in Sillah's second work, *Dabbali Gi*,⁷ this paper takes exception in presenting those themes here.

Perfect (2017) records that the hero's last years were mostly spent in abject poverty, taking refuge in their family house at 4 Allen Street, Bathurst (now Banjul). In death, on 3 January 1958, he was without friends or followers. He was avoided by friends and family to escape the wrath of the colonial government. His funeral, which was held at the Methodist Church in Dobson Street, Bathurst, on 19th January 1958, did not receive the support it deserved. This symbolizes the greatest betrayal he received, even from his ardent disciples or students.

We may conclude that Mundaw was not understood by his people at the time. Although he had modest recognition at the peak of his struggles, he died without friends and followers. This was made worse by the fact that the colonial government did not have him in their good books (Hughes and Perfect, 2006). In Grey-Johnsons' *Watchdog of The Gambia*, Sillah's *When the Monkey Talks*, and Gomez's "Voice of Conscience," all decried how Small had been labelled

⁷ Daabali is a Wolof word that refers to a vicious cycle of living in debt.



an agitator, a rebel, a stubborn troublemaker who lacked judgement and courtesy, and to a point, profiled as link-subversive.

It is from this critical background that Sillah's character was born and would start his struggle. Mundaw began his struggle with a quest to create Kataminians with a free-thinking mind, much like Bhubaneswari, who was a member of a liberation movement. With his education, Mundaw, apart from his role as a missionary agent, would gather peasants to teach them numeracy and literacy. He would go further to call for quality education for all citizens, as could be discerned from the following quotation: "We must continue to press on for our rights to formal education so that we can all read and write and empower ourselves" (Sillah, 2003, p. 142).

Moreover, Mundaw was to make it his life's mission not only to unify Kataminians but also to stand in direct opposition to the status quo. This meant sacrificing a life of comfort and luxury that being silent about the exploitation of his people would have earned him. In *When the Monkey Talks*, we can allude to where Sillah presents Mundaw as a foil to many leaders whose idealism had been marred by their corrupt inclination to primitive loyalties they owed either to religion, ethnicity, or caste. Even though Mundaw belonged to the minority Aku Christian community, he is seen advocating for fair representation of the Muslim community in the Legislative Council. He reports this to his followers:

The number of Christian representatives has reduced to one to make room for more representation from the Mohammedan community. Both the petition that we sent directly to the governor and the Secretary of State in London were beginning to pay dividends (Sillah, 2003, p. 220).



The lesson to be learned from Mundaw in this extract is that leaders should first and foremost be unifiers who see beyond status, religion, ethnicity, or caste. However, more than six decades after his demise, the country he had fought to free from the bane of tribalism, nepotism and exploitation lives, perpetually sleepwalking itself to its doom.

Being bent on enlightening his people and fighting colonial domination, Small had received persecutions that exiled him to neighboring Senegal. But like Grey-Johnson would have it, this exile enabled him to launch the first nationalist newspaper that would critique government policies in Bathurst. When the colonial government introduced the cash crop economy, Small did not hesitate to use the editorial column of his newspaper to challenge the policy. Again, was he understood?

Closely connected to this national drive is his role as organizer and participant at the National Congress of British West Africa in March 1920, where the seed of collective struggle for independence was born. David Perfect records that Small, whose theme was “The right of West Africans to self-determination,” was one of the eleven principal speakers. He demanded justification and criticized colonial powers for the practice of exchanging colonies, having no regard whatsoever for the local political dynamics. This incident has been captured succinctly by Sillah towards the end of the novel, where Mundaw announced to his followers (by way of accountability) the subvention that has been raised by their continued support to the Pan African Movement of West Africa (National Congress of British West Africa, NCBWA).

Furthermore, Sillah has also captured Mundaw as a unionist leader who played a pivotal role in the formation of the first-ever trade union in Kataminaland. Mundaw realized that peasants were being cheated at the scale and the capitalist economy had excluded them from bargaining or having a fair price for their produce. He proposed and went on to form the Galoyaa



Trade Union (Bathurst Trade Union): “Above all, we must encourage the peasants to organize so that they come together in producer co-operatives and bargain for a fair price for their produce” (Sillah, 2003, p. 142).

Hughes and Perfect (2006) will record that in December 1930, Small was able to organize farmers to organize a successful *tong*⁸ by refusing to sell their groundnut and threatening to sell their produce in neighboring Sunnugaal (Senegal). They also recorded that the *tong* is discussed in the Gambia Outlook newspaper bulletin of 14th February 1931.

It is perhaps ironical that our economies are bent on being the direct opposite of what the founding fathers fought for. When Mundaw eventually got elected in the Legislative Council, Sillah’s presentation of him left no doubt that he served his people with honor and dignity unmatched, as could be drawn from his assessment of himself:

When I joined the council, I promised you that I would continue to serve you to the best of my ability and that I would conform to the highest ethical standards that the office of the member of the Legislative Council demands of me. I also said that I should be accountable to you at all times regardless of what obstacles are put in my way. My promises of yesterday are the same today and they shall be true for tomorrow (Sillah, 2003, p. 275).

It will be sad to know that not much has the subaltern learned from Mundaw’s exemplary leadership by putting national interest before individual interest. He was like an unofficial ombudsman who would raise the grievances of his people and dare the consequences. To him, leaders were servants and not masters, as it prevails today. It is uncommon for scandals of

⁸ From native language, meaning ‘*embargo/boycott*’ in selling their groundnuts to the colonial merchants in the Gambia for them to increase their buying price for groundnuts



bribery, corruption, nepotism, and numerous other forms of social vices to emerge from a society that Mundaw had tried so hard to forge. But will his ideals mean anything to the future generation he tried to protect? To borrow a phrase from Armah, *are the beautiful ones born yet?* Would anyone be bold enough to report the realities of our time and bequeath it as a rich legacy to any future generation?

We may want to end this argument with Mundaw's stern and unapologetic stance against colonial rule and the exploitation of his people. Even though he was aware of his precarious situation, he could not be deterred by threats, profiling, or name-calling.

I know the establishment brands me a mad agitator! In my view I may be mad but at least there is a method in my madness. I would rather be mad than to be sane and compromise our issues and our lives (Sillah, 2003, p. 284).

Many years later, when you ask the average Gambian who Edward Francis Small was, the best you can get is that it is the name of the main referral hospital in Banjul. Therefore, just like Bhubaneswari, Small, as a text, could not be read during his time and in death. It is only as recent as 2013 that the main referral and teaching hospital in The Gambia would be renamed Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. Even though this new recognition should be applauded, there are still arguments as to why colonial heritage should remain celebrated by retaining colonial names for public institutions, especially learning institutions such as Armitage High School, named after a former colonial governor, Governor Cecil Armitage. Such existence betrays our respect for Small's honor, and it does not reflect a byproduct of a collective consciousness and intelligence.



Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the futility of the subaltern speech by hypothetically answering the Spivak question with a YES and then adding, “What if the subaltern speaks? Will the subaltern be heard?” NO! We have assumed that Mundaw was the metaphorical Bhubaneswari, who also translates to Concetta Principe’s metaphorical *sati*. This paper agrees with her position on the issue of ambivalence in Spivak’s conclusions. We support the view that if Spivak could read Bhubaneswari as text, then indeed the subaltern subject can speak. However, our argument is not only limited to the ability or inability of the subaltern group with respect to its speech or writing; ours is on the attention given to the subaltern text by all others involved directly or not so directly in understanding the circumstances leading to the writing of the text in the first place.

Thus far, the arguments given in this paper point to the fact that Mundaw, for all time, has tried to speak, but he could not be heard; the forces against him were too powerful, and there is no ruling out the fact that perhaps he emerged from a minority group on two fronts. Therefore, it is the position of this paper that since our collective consciousness could not bring an end to what Small had been fighting for, then much as the subaltern cannot speak, when the monkey talked, *the monkey*⁹ *did not hear*. From the lives and legacies of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri and Edward Francis Small, we may conclude that the subaltern’s voice is often silenced, especially when controlled by imperial and patriarchal systems.

⁹ Disclaimer: the paper does not in any way use the word ‘monkey’ to degrade any set of people, gender or race. It is a metaphor that Sillah used in his text.



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American War-Play and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in New World

Order: A New Historicist Study of Red Birds

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Abstract

The present study analyzes the novel *Red Birds* by Mohammed Hanif from the perspective of New Historicism to find out the actual socio-political, economic and cultural context of the Middle East and South Asia portrayed in the novel. The study uses Montrose (1986) and Greenblatt's (1982) theoretical tenants to analyze the novel to unveil the real scenario of war game in the third world countries. The study is significant to know the real time context of the Middle East in terms of American war play, hegemonic shift, dialogic tension and post-traumatic stress disorder because of the geo-political and economic significance of the region for America and other regional powers. The study is also significant in unveiling the so called agenda of the US in making the world a better place through a new world order. The findings of the study reveal that the writer has not only unveiled the unavoidable havocs of the American war game in the context of Middle East and South Asia through *Red Birds*, but he has also projected the duel

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face of the American military and policy think tankers in maintaining hegemonic control over the people of the Middle East and South Asia. The study further reveals that the American narrative of a better and safer new world order has caused dialogic tension and post-traumatic stress disorder to the indigenous people of the region. To cap it all, the events and happenings unfold social, cultural, economic, mental conditions of the people, disillusionment and fantasy of the American warriors to develop a real-world context of the events, and the impacts of these misadventures in the lives of indigenous people and American soldiers deployed in the Middle East and South Asia.

Keywords: New Historicism, War play, Dialogic tension, Post-traumatic stress disorder, New world order.

Introduction

In contemporary era, South Asian literature approaches the disturbance that is believed to be the aftermath of War on Terror. In post 9/11 era, most of the south Asian writers attempted to unveil the reality of this war through their writings. One of those literary pieces, Mohammed Hanif's *Red Birds* is the critique on US foreign policy. This highlights the victimization of the South Asian nations by representing South Asia as "a war-torn, devastated half-forgotten place" (Nayeri, 2018, p. n.pag). Reviewing Mark Athitakis in *The Washington Post*, he highlights the contextual parameters of use of satire in *Red Birds*: "there is no question that central target of Hanif's satire is the American military and its various misadventures in the Middle East" (Athitakis, 2019, p. n.pag). It shares the demographical description of South Asian region that are become desert in American war-play by highlighting the way, 'people are living in the absurd consequences of war culture'.



Highlighting the effects of American doubled-edged role in destructing peace and raising slogans for it together, Hanif is craftily shared the effects of 9/11 on civilians. Devine Heriyanto, in her article, is of the view that *Red Birds* is “a satire on The American military [rhetoric] and foreign policy” (Heriyanto, 2019, p. n.pag). She exhibits the novel’s narrative of war as a satirical critique that questions American legitimization of its invasions in many countries of the world. Mouthpiece of Momo in the novel posits the absurdity of American’s hegemonic war on terror. At one place, she says, “I am a survivor of the most useless war in history of wars. Even our conquerors have abandoned us” (Hanif, 2018, p. 48). Sceptic war narrative that subscribes violence and terror around the globe, in Sadaf Halai’s words, is the narrative of Momo who is not only decentring the myth of 9/11 but also has demystifying the aftermath of 9/11 that has once mystified under the slogan of “the guardian of nations” (Halai, 2018, p. n.pag). This crackling voice of war on terror narrative is portrayed in *Red Birds* that ironize the American military narrative, in the light of Cox and Linklater’s critique of *Clash of Civilizations*. It foregrounds a surrealistic critique on the unpredictable and ambivalent stance of the aftermath of 9/11 upon the cultural, social and political chaos that is prevailing upon the Global South and Global North.

Hanif’s attempt to provide a ‘searing critique’ of situating America’s role in the War on Terror, in Lalitha Subramanian’s words, lies in Ellie’s drastic approach of war as mechanical cycle from which he is unable to release himself (Subramanian, 2018, p. n.pag). Powerful nations are controlling the lives of people in an ancient desert. In Chapter 4, “Ellie”, of *Red Birds*, Ellie says, “war has been condensed to carpet-bombing followed by dry rations and craft for the refugees” (Hanif, 2018, p. 32). This picture of carpet-bombing is prevailing upon the South Asian regions especially Afghanistan. It posits the rage that America has triggered to achieve his hegemony in South Asia. However, it is not the picture of military rhetoric, America possesses until one does



not refer to Mutt's following lines: "First they bomb us from the skies, then they work hard to cure our stress" (Hanif, 2018, p. 26). Mutt's narrative hails the sceptic and hypocritical intervention of America in South Asia in general and in the world of Muslims in particular.

In order to presents deep insights to the understanding of the American was-ply in the novel *Red Birds*, the study undertake New Historicism as a critical method to unveil the untold realities of the war destruction and undocumented experiences of the invaded people who become the victim of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although, New Historicism is not holistic practice, all the theorists normally have the equivalent scholarly scrutinizing mode. They discover a story from the past, like piece of the set of experienced event, a sonnet, the photos and the structure, and afterward investigate the profound understanding and which means of them to relate them with their analysis. In a wider sense, the new historicism centres around the relationship between the customs, social circumstances and the literary works in the forming time frame and the texts to reorganize the experience of the past. Furthermore, it also accounts to uncover the historical description of events experienced in literary work as counter-narratives.

Research Statement

The research statement of this research is as follows:

Red Birds traces post-traumatic stress disorder that reveals the American Military Rhetoric in connection with the American war-play in the Middle East and unfolds connection between hegemonic shifts and dialogic tension in the light of Montrose concept 'historicity of text and textuality of history'.

Objectives of the Study

The study has following research objectives:



1. The study aims to explore the socio-cultural context in which Mohammed Hanif wrote the novel *Red Birds*.
2. It also aims to unearth the hegemonic shift and dialogic tension in the novel, which makes it a powerful voice in New Historicist interpretation.
3. It also attempts to explore the influence of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which leaves deep effects on the lives of the people in host countries.

Research Questions

The study attempts to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the biographical and historical background that inspired Mohammed Hanif to write *Red Birds*?
2. How does *Red Birds* describe the hegemonic shifts and dialogic tensions in the spatiality of novel with reference to the textual and contextual parameters?
3. How does post-traumatic stress disorder prevail in the time and place of the novel?

Significance of the study

The study is significant in many ways. At the first place, the scope of this research lies in the interests of the researchers who intend to explore the literary texts in connection with the role of America in constructing new world order and the effects of the war on terror in the Middle East and South Asia as the aftermath of 9/11. This research will be a point of departure to draw a landscape for the emerging researchers in this field.

Secondly, the study bridges the gap between fiction and history; fiction on one hand describes the subjective views of the writer on a specific event while, history on the other hand documents the real instances happened during the war on terror. In this regard, the study



intermingles the fiction and history by presenting a deep insight into the historical instances in a n explorative way. The analysis of the study illuminates the facts of previous events in an interesting way.

Lastly, the study is also beneficial to understand New World Order and its impacts on contemporary literature. The study unearths the notions of hegemonic shifts and dialogic tension in relation to American war on terror. Lastly, it also explains how socio-political events compel the writer to become the voice of thousands of innocent people.

Research Design

The study incorporates the qualitative research involving descriptions and analysis of the text. The study design accounts Textual Analysis to come up with the particular passages of the text significant in terms of New Historicist reading.

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis involves interpretation of any literary or non-literary text to comprehend the underlined motives, socio-cultural forces and critical ideologies which play their role in the production of the text. Textual analysis is the main strategy in literary analysis. Practically, all work in this field includes top to bottom analysis of texts.

Data Collection

The sample data of the study includes chunks from the text which are important in terms of New Historicist reading. For that purpose, the technique of close reading is applied to the text. It explores the connection between the hidden realities of the text to find the social forces which produce the text. The text is not empty of its context in portraying it's meanings but embedded in



the outside context and socio-cultural forces influencing its production. In order to draw out those influential forces, close reading is employed. It is identified with the hermeneutical triangle since three significant characteristics are inspected: the rhetoric or creator of the message; the audience(s); and the actual message. It endeavours to uncover the underlined meanings that give a specific text consistency and explanatory impact. For doing close reading of the text, following three steps were taken:

1. The text was studied particularly in the light of the cultural context in which it is produced.
2. The extracted passages, events and characters are analysed through the lens of New Historicism.
3. Reading and analysing the novel in the context of the tenets of New Historicist theory is utilized as a major method in this study.

Through close reading, the text was demarcated in terms of framework of the study for analysis by highlighting characters, themes, hidden ideologies and historical forces of the text *Red Birds*.

Understanding New Historicism and Key Theorists

As a school of literary criticism in the late 20th century, new historicism aims to explore socio-cultural and historical context of the writer and the literary period in which a literary text is created. In simple words, any piece of literature is a product of time in the opinion of new historicist critics. Consequently, a literary work reflects the life and the time of the author and the historical circumstances and happenings at the time of the production of the literary work. In the opinion of Guerin, Labor, Morgan and Reesman (1992), a literary text reflects partially but not exclusively the life and time of the author. As far as the job of a literary critic is concerned, he/she has to



develop an understanding of the history of the writer and socio-political events surrounding his life to analyze and understand a literary text, since it is inevitable to separate history from the text. Moreover, the themes and the characters of a literary work share the qualities and characteristics of the society of which the author is part. As a result, literature is a product of man and history and is subjective in nature.

The time of literary production, history and circumstances surrounding the life of the author are the primary concerns of new historicism. Colebrook (1997) views historicist studies as a nexus between the text and the history. Moreover, the objective of new historicism is to explore the relation between the text and the outer world, between the text and its meanings and between the art and the history. Not only the connection between the text and the historical context is inevitable, but dynamic also because the history can itself be a text or vice versa. Greenblatt (1982), who is the forerunner of new historicism, suggests that the critical inquiry of a literary text should focus on the fact that the portrayal of history is possible through literature. Therefore, the critics need to study and analyze the literary texts from the perspective of new historicism. New historicist critics endeavour to analyse the material effect of a literary text and the historical instances that it allegorizes through the text. The critical practices of new historicism deviate from all those theories of meaning that propagate the idea that the text is the determiner of semantic context and the meanings lie in the text itself.

Gallagher (1985) opines the view that while reading a text using the lens of new historicism; both the literary and non-literary texts act as the constituent elements of historical discourses. So, the job of new historicist practitioners is to draw connection between text, history, culture and the writer's biography. In the similar vein, Vesser (1989) believes that new historicism is a gate way for the scholars to transcend the boundaries of art, literature, history, anthropology,



politics and economics and engage in a multidisciplinary study of the literary texts. New historicist critique is primarily based on two assumptions. First, man is a construct. Second, the investigator of history is the product of the history itself, so he/she cannot trace otherness of a text in pure and objective form. Vesser (1989) defines it as “a realm of retrievable fact or a construct made up of textualized traces assembled in various configurations by the historian interpreter” (p. 13) Howard (1986) believes that any literary text functions as a context or a bridge for material, cultural or historical aspects of the society the writer is part of.

New criticism and formalism believe contrary to what new historicism propagates in analyzing a literary work. Both the schools of thought interpret a literary text without taking into consideration the historical and biographical context of the writer or the age of which the writer is a part. Formalism promotes close reading which gives an intuitive and perceptive analysis of the text considering them as a form. Formalists analyse text in a detailed form not only stanza by stanza but also word by word. Using the dictionaries and figurative connotations of a word, an interpreter can arrange the words together and bring out the connotation according to the contexts. Interpreting and analyzing of a word can be done in as many contexts as possible. Formalists focused on the denotations, shape, connotations, symbols, context, images, structure, repeated details, denouement, climax, rhymes, interrelationships, rhythms, tensions and balances and anything that makes the composition distinctive (Guerin, Labor, Morgan & Reesman, p. 97).

According Greenblatt (1982), connotations are not intrinsic focal points of a text. Beyond the limits of the theatre and besides the overall critical reception, a stronger aspect in the construction of connotation, in the above mentioned instance, is the very practice of performance in the open streets and houses. The mindfulness of the audience’s capacity to actively produce the new connotations is betrayed by the queen’s identification with Richard II, for Greenblatt, this



delimits the basic notions of assurance in a common critical readership, but somewhat underestimates the very aspects of such as a thing as basic response and uncovers the objectives of the right reading, as a myth.

Greenblatt (1982) illustrates that how the distribution of communal energy is contributed by texts and other symbolic goods through socializing via mediums of negotiation and exchange. Greenblatt (1982) explains the way in which text and the symbolic images take a part in the shaping the social energy which intensifies experiences that give meanings and values to life.

The centre of this whole process of circulation is considered as a dialectics between differentiation and tantalization, as an influential societal energy that fluctuates among the extremes of unlikeness and evenness. On various places, Greenblatt (1982) has discussed about the several notions of this Poetics of Culture. He has elaborated the transmission of societal energy, the procedure of self-fashioning and the dialectics of differentiation and tantalization. Some problems of this method are discussed in this essay, it is argued that as compared to the traditional hermeneutics, the previously discussed dialectics, societal energy and self-fashioning are not definite parts of the socio-historical contexts rather are only phenomenon in Greenblatt's analysis version of the texts. Whereas, besides of its fundamental claims, poetics of culture is considered as a genuine hermeneutics that is operating in a more or less conventional trace.

Lentricchia (1989), in *After the New Historicism*, relates "the anti-historical impulses of formalist theories of literary criticism" with teleological and Universalist notions of history. In contradiction to this unsuitable association of totalizing and uniting theories, Lentricchia contradicts the diversity of "histories" which are characterized by "forces of contradiction, heterogeneity, difference and fragmentation."



The new perspective of historicist studies is characterized by historicity and text, social bonding and cultural specificity. All the writings including those texts that the literary critics study and or the texts in which the critics study about those texts that they study form the textuality of history. Montrose (1986) says that the past is not always completely and authentic because it has not been mediated by texts that are constructed by historians. These texts construct an incomplete history to which we as the readers have an access.

Greenblatt (1982) opines that the literature is historical because it is socially and culturally shaped and constructed by a collective consciousness. The most proper and apt way to understand literature is to understand the culture and society of which it is a part. It entails that the literature is not merely a product of human mind, but a product of history as well. Likewise, man is also a social construct based on socio-political forces and nothing transcends history except the human nature. Myers (1989) believes that history is not something that is cause or source of a literary work. Rather, the association between history and literature is dialectic. So, a literary work is not just a product or producer, but an end and source of history as well. As a result, history can no longer be seen as a process that completes itself at the start of a work. The critics of new historicism give priority to the ideology than the history because a text is part of cultural ideology shared over generations.

New Historicism and American War-play

American war-play is a critical tenant of the study devised to unearth the construal of American military endeavours as a “just war”. It explores the military ventures and hegemonic designs of America to invade the weaker states for material gains. It is one the major ingredients in her domestic and foreign policy to maintain economic stability and to safeguard its national interest



aboard. As America is the biggest arms supplier in the world, it is mandatory for her to play an unending war so that its economy will flourish.

The war-play in the Middle East and South Asia were the practical implications of its policies. Similarly, America being a super power needs military bases in different regions that enables her to project power, influence activities aboard and conduct expeditionary warfare. Precisely, war-play is America's strategic policy under the flag of her peace-making and rehabilitation missions in the countries it invaded. The phenomenon of war-play is commonly employed to invade those countries that are rich in natural resources, devastated by civil war, toppled by unwanted governments, drone attacks and carpet bombing on anti-American civilians and arm-supply to rebellion groups to peruse its national interest and to maintain its hegemony in the global politics.

The novel unveils the American designs of war-play in war-torn countries. It is rich in anti-American sentiments and destructions caused by those designs. As it is a matter of fact that the history texts are full of appreciating the American version of war by documenting the successes of American army in war field and putting the innocent people under their brutal swords, a New Historicist analysis on the under hand, unveils the construal of war-play designs to expose the undocumented realities. For that purpose, significant chunks of the novel and apprehensive comments of the characters of novel are selected and analyzed through New Historicist lens. The interpretation of these passages reveals a critical exploration of political ideology behind the construal of war-play.



Literature Review

The outcome of the research is to fill in as Foucauldian bio-politics, as it embraces a halfway perspective only. In one manner, it is an integral ability to govern, and in another, bio-political rationalities for administering over the crisis and downturn chances emerge from the neo-liberalization of all parts of public activity through adaptable powers. This privatization of financialization of material benefit is to the detriment of the deficiency of society in each circle of life, which demonstrates the adaptability or recovery in Liberal Doxa's modification. The research investigated the potential outcomes of neo-liberal adaptable bio-political administration through a textual bio-political study of the economy of socialization from the '*Red Birds*' by *Mohammed Hanif* and '*The Wasted Vigil*' by *Nadeem Aslam*. These novels mirror the strong idea of neoliberal inclinations and the destruction brought about by its nine structures, through its force and capacity to change ethnicities.

Karim (2020) this text explores British Pakistani author Mohammed Hanif's novel *Red Birds* (2018) as a contemporary, satirical account of the US Navy's imperialist war strategy (the so-called "Military Revolution") while grabbing the international development (USAID), and the achievement of a capitalist financial system within the so-called Muslim region. In Hanif's novel, US academic research efforts to know the "Muslim Mind" and to supply medical treatment for traumatized war victims reinforces the worldwide view of the global humanity, the argument for determining the opposite. However, *Red Birds* also mock Muslim societies within the Third World, which are mired in beliefs, lack of progress and cultural degeneration. Hanif's dark humour dramatically exposes misunderstandings also known as cultural misunderstandings on each side of the novel's apparent binary: modern neo-imperialist America and therefore the economically insecure Third World Muslim country.



Veyrt (2020) The new subalterns, which are given an area and standing on the margins of states or who are forcibly displaced by war, famine or natural disasters, are at the guts of two novels by Pakistani authors Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif's *Exit West* (2017) and *Red Birds* (2018), respectively. Both novels combine political interpretation and engagement with the principles of realistic representation to supply one answer to the refugee and immigrant crisis. *Exit West* and *Red Birds* represent efforts to capture the refugee crisis and therefore the consequences of the war on terror on civilian populations through the paradigm of highly aesthetic imaginary forms, instead of counting on actual legal definitions and population data. In real, *Exit West* and *Red Birds* are therefore politically and morally committed novels about the socio-economic category of precariat, describing uncertainty towards the character of dealing and to the language itself.

Anjum, Rehman and Samad stated in their research that Mohammed Hanif's role can be taken as a native informant in representing his culture and religion of Islam in his novel, *Red Birds* (2018). Edward Said's post-colonial theory, as presented in *Orientalism* (1995) and *Covering Islam* (2009), is employed as a tool to research the novel from text and context. The research methodology is commendable and exploratory.

According to Said (1995), political knowledge can influence state policies regarding a particular region, as is obvious within *Red Birds*. *Hanif (2018)* uses the characters of Major Eliie and Momo as his mouthpieces within the novel to portray Muslims as backward and savage. For Muslims, Hanif's view presents the story of Neo-Orientalists. As Dabashi (2011) argues, Neo-Orientalists have historically used Diasporas' writers for own purposes. Hanif, as a native informant, has misrepresented Islam in *Red Birds (2018)*. Hanif has presented Islam as an outdated



religion. The modern-day world doesn't get to spread any religious or cultural negativity. Instead, we would like flexibility and acceptance for peaceful coexistence.

Chughtai (2020) Western domination of world politics and therefore the deception of freedom created by European powers to 3rd World nations are required and this text sheds light on the story of refugees born out of the War over the struggle for power. This is often a contradictory analysis of modern-day global slavery, emphasizing the representation of various attitudes from the purpose of view of both civilizations within the context of migration against the dominant discourse. The present era is the results of modern-day colonization and imperialism in terms of the migration and arrival of immigrants hence, the conflict and therefore the civil chaos usually happen.

Hamid's *Exit West* and Hanif's *Red Birds* provide voices to people that have lost their homes and families in wars and genocides. Representations of the refugee crisis provide a basis for contradictory analysis of the perspectives of those who face displacement. The post-colonial ideology is adopted by the researcher to beat the binary and dichotomy entangled within the understanding of migration patterns. So, the philosophies of Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha's provide a base for understanding contemporary ruined world order. Using his point of view, this study equates the continued structure of slavery and therefore the future problem of this sort of slavery of the colonial era can be judged.

Mahmood (2019) in the Daily Times review says that *The Red Bird* centres around relocation and socio-political driven issues because of individuals living on the borders of rich nations. These lead to removal and relocation of individuals from their homes and territories due to conflicts, wars, and sometimes because of climate change. *Red Birds* is a novel about the vanity of war and the inconceivability of harmony. An American pilot arrived in the desert. He is stuck



some place. Frenzy shrouds him. Connections and kinships are significant and Hanif clarifies that form connections. It doesn't make any difference in case if it's a local or you're involved with him, interestingly, you regard each other's way of life, religion and the convictions of the individual you're involved with. The novel elaborates the idea that how you recollect the past the most. Memories or agonizing memories of the past are stuck in our awareness and that is the thing that makes a bona fide authentic individual.

A presumption of “haunting” the skies regarding Americans is going through *Red Birds*. At last, we comprehend that this allegory has manifested, albeit the particulars are ambiguous. Are these solitary dangers only for the exile camp occupants or the phantoms of Americans who simply need to return home? Or then again in the writer’s purposeful topographical vagueness, living day to day after all the war losses and certain casualties: warriors and civilians? Because of the vagueness of what's going on, it is hard to say how fruitful Hanif's book has been? What is clear, nonetheless, is that somebody been working profound constantly: the doubleness of purpose of a Kafkaesque, with one underlying structural absurdity implanted in the other. We can’t accept who is alive and who isn’t? However, the pattern of war is considerably really disturbing. In it, Hanif riffs put on weight until he maintains his core interest: “if I didn’t bomb some place,” Eli asked a USAID specialist, “how would you save that place? If I didn’t take out homes who would need shelter? If I didn’t obliterate cities, how would you get to set up refugee camps?”

Saha (2019) stated that *Red Birds* contains elaborately and specifically convincing narrative, weaving its tapestry with different viewpoints, giving frequenting bits of knowledge bound with mockery and sarcasm. It is a striking accomplishment of verbal daringness, shrewd, burning, mentally close and fast paced assessment of lives. Hanif concedes that the book isn't autobiography in any case, since his own life is ‘genuinely dull and unsurprising in a working class



sort of way'. Hanif's methodology is an interruption, taking account to a plane where ascertaining the core is wading through or dealing with absurd truths and flippant parodies and satires. This interaction becomes profoundly immersing with three POVs straying from the ignoble, upsetting, or frightful features of battle with open corresponds. For Hanif, these are 'tears of blood' and announce himself in 'each character, each spot, each feeling, each grain of sand, every single joke', yet, handily disconnecting his being from these challenging disclosures. Hanif shows huge perspicacity in keeping the novel vivacious and hazily sharp. Its design is that of psychological probing, surveying the entanglements of a war. Nonetheless, he appears to uncover the error in human lead as well.

In spite of composing a provocative story accurately and managing its existential ramifications, Hanif doesn't welcome allegorical or figurative interpretations. Inclining towards authenticity and realism, it means to hoist the discernible pieces that feature the outcomes of people going through wars and how individuals profited from those conflicts. He concedes that his report inclusion of war-torn families and missing people in Balochistan has invaded *Red Birds* as Ali disappears. The subsequent disturbance doesn't create uproar. However, it makes a hair-raising inclination that raises worries about its being dead or actually disfigured. In any case, Hanif didn't keep Ali's disappearance a mystery and ends the novel, connecting the predicament of a lamenting, hallucinating mother and a sibling who need to live with the blame of not having the option to save him.

Athitakis (2019) '*Red Birds*' is a dark comic war novel, which need harsh incongruity and irony like horror tales need squeaking sections of floorboards. It's a tool that Hanif, who left the Pakistan Air Force Academy to seek after a writing profession, knows well and uses regularly. Therefore, "*Red Birds*" is a piercingly roar with laughter novel in a class that doesn't regularly



stand as a comedy. Yet, Hanif pushes his narrative more than an irony, extending his evaluate of America's military interventions to incorporate parody, satire, phantom stories and absurdist touches — up to and including a canine narrator that is normally more astute than any human in the room. Doubtlessly that the focal objective of Hanif's parody is the American military and its different stumbles in the Centre East. But since the area of “*Red Birds*” is anonymous, his satire is all the more intensely widespread, pulling in an entire complex of evacuees, help labourers and more who've been compelled to live with the ridiculous outcomes of war culture. On schedule, Momo gets a little more brilliant concerning what's moving to make him cash. His illumination, similar to the novel in general, is witty and squashing.

Farhan (2019) remarks on the ‘*Red Birds*’ in *World Literature Today*, saying that the loathsome idea of the war and the subsequent unfortunate realities have been caught in Mohammed Hanif's new novel ‘*Red Birds*’. Hanif gave the harsh story of the conflict with comical effect however scenes that have disastrous impacts in the book. Regularly in an ironical tone, the novel mocks the conflict in an exceptionally provocative and fascinating manner. The most significant and important component of Hanif's writing is the portrayal of the fierce results of the war. The novel is set in an obscure country, it very well may be estimated that it is in the Centre East, where US powers dropped bombs to obliterate the country. The novel is disparaging of US war arrangements and US intercession in the Centre East. Hanif's most noteworthy accomplishment lies by the way he effectively consolidates two distinct potential outcomes – comic as well as tragic, and offers his pursuers a delightful formula. Despite the fact that his writing has no enlivening cushion and no pointlessness, his enchanting style and beguiling story make it an interesting novel to read.



Ahmed (2021), in the Daily Times, discussing the postcolonial and modern fiction recommends that the significant reason behind the work of multi-narrative method is to give not a one-dimensional story but rather the multi-dimensional one in light of the fact that each narrator gives an alternate point of view reference to their perspective on the world and thus establishing and fostering a climate of multiple perspectives. This is exceptionally helpful for the reader too on the grounds that he discovers more freedoms to distinguish himself regarding his own perspective. The postcolonial writers observed this procedure to be of adequate use for the most part to give somewhere around two-dimensional perspective on the narratives in light of the fact that their accounts for the most part addressed the contention between the colonized and the colonizer. Writers of Pakistani postcolonial fiction have utilized this procedure bounteously. Multi-perceptiveness through multi-narrator strategy is quite evident in Hanif's most recent novel *Red Birds*.

Nayeri (2018) in *The Guardian* discusses the grotesqueness of war that splendidly caught in this novel described by a teenage refugee. The real brutalities of war are displayed in speedy, moving strokes: a kid killed who was attempting to eliminate the firearm from a reinforced vehicle, Momo waiting at every night that his Mom Dear will quit crying. Hanif utilizes literary tools from both east and west perspectives joined with humour. Like Hanif's past two books, *Red Birds* is brimming with dark comedy and eviscerations of war and the solitary way it draws out human grotesqueness. Meanwhile, Satire depends on a facade of sincerity: the reader alone notices idiocies that the characters live by; while the writer doesn't assist straightforwardly. In *Red Birds*, the insane internal logic that we may see all alone is disclosed to us by the omniscient philosopher dog. Surely Mutt's voice is charming, and he would make an astounding writer, however he is all high axiom.



Hegemonic shift: a new historicist analysis of *Red Birds*

In the spatiality of novel, there are ongoing unexplained mysteries projected by super power states such as America to retain their hegemonic upper hand in the global politics. After the end of cold war when Russia was defeated America emerged as global sole power, resultantly she transformed the world order according to liberal ideology and named it as new world order. To maintain this so called new world order America extended its military expenditure to safeguard its national interest. For instance, in 1990-1991 America invaded Kuwait apparently to save it from the attacks of Iraqi military dictator Saddam Hussain who was installed as president of Iraq by America to counter the influence of Russia in the Middle East. Later on Saddam Hussain initiated the Gulf War with neighbours notably with Kuwait-an oil rich country. America being a global big brother intervened Kuwait to safeguard it from Saddam's terror. Political critics, in this connection argue that, America intervened Kuwait not because to provide safeguard rather to capture the oil reservoirs of Kuwait. Similarly, the United States, to abide other countries from challenging its status quo, it didn't feel reluctant to launch a war on the states that were thought to be adversary sympathizers. In this tug of war between great powers the smaller one became the victim of American led war-play.

In this connection the American war-play in the Middle East and the South Asia possess greater significance to understand the hegemonic shift in political realm of the time. These great games engulf the peace and security of the people of underdeveloped countries, their resources were theft, and their homes were dismantled by drone attacks and left the inhabitants to death. As the historical context is depicted in following lines:

The Colonel had pulled out a map. The Colonel still liked his printed maps and coloured thumbtacks and pointers and cross hairs on targets. Before he could send us off to wipe out



a bit of earth, he liked doing his thing with the pointer. In a world of uncertainty, if you can nail them down on a paper map, the enemy's existence becomes much more real. (7)

The lines show that the colonel which represents the missionary of super power can launch war on any state of their choice with just the single stroke of pen. The history depicted that a war is always realized as good when America is benefited materialistically as in the novel it is said, "But the Colonel had never resisted a good war" (7). As it is a matter of fact that America is the biggest weapon supplier and she needs war as a commercial commodity to maximize its economy to retain her hegemonic position among rivals. This phenomenon requires America to be in a continuous war. Therefore, the war-play is a necessary tool to keep invaded countries in a constant servitude as the line show, "Colonel Slatter had laid out the foundations: We used to have art for art's sake; now we have war for the sake of war" (32). It is evident from the pages of history that whenever America intended to get her hand over a host country she always propagates a mission civilization. Under the flag of mission civilization she saves her face in international community that she is going to build the political infrastructure there which requires providing quality education, basic needs and human right protection. On the contrary, a new historicist context of the novel presents a demise picture of the so-called mission civilization; America trained thousands of young enthusiastic Muslim boys to fight against its ideological rival soviet union when she invaded Afghanistan. *Additionally, the few instances of imparting knowledge to host population were from the American channels. These channels did what was intended by American war-play; make them see what we want them to see. The novel criticizes this phenomenon in the following lines.*

Furthermore, it is also argued that the invader always prevail his cultural and sociological upbringings. They always inspired young boys from the host country to become their pawns in war by unavoidable attraction in military vehicles, uniform and weaponry. The following lines



depict that whenever the soldiers came out of the hangar, they were escorted by shining metallic vehicles and attractive guns. “They take our boys because they think that’s all we have. And to lure the boys they sent out their tallest soldiers, their shiniest vehicles (65). Additionally, at an instance in the novel, America propagated its military power by showing its war missionary to local population. In the following lines, the novel beautifully depicts the shallow patrolling of military guards on sophisticated war vehicles with lethal modern weaponry in their hands.

In the world of multi-polarity, nations are trying hard to maintain their upper hand to influence global activities. For this purpose they have developed modern, sophisticated and lethal weapons to conduct military operations so that they can protect their interest elsewhere. In the fight of big elephants the grass under their feet always destroyed.

Moreover, the American notion of “do more” is explicitly elaborated in the novel which means that America dictates small states to act according to the sweet will of America, and the states execute the plans without any resistant. In other words, no one can say no to America, because either of the fear or their economic dependence on America: “You know that he wanted to go. And the people in the Hangar wanted him also. Who can say no to a son?’ he says. ‘Who can say no to Americans?’” (196). In the spatiality of novel, Mohammed Hanif explicitly elaborated the political power shifting in the Middle East as well as in the South Asia. In these regions the American hegemony was challenged by uprising economic and military power China. America in retaliation expanded its supply of weapons to those countries where the rivals influence was growing. It trained the locals to fight America’s war. Therefore, the distribution of lethal and sophisticated American weapons to the world is considered as war strategy to avoid hegemonic shift in the globe. The following lines portrays those great powers has established a large scale



business of weapon selling to small countries so that their economy and power status quo will be unharmed.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the characters of the novel and New Historicist Critique

Post-traumatic stress disorder is traditionally taken as an anxiety disorder in persons who have experienced any traumatic event for example any natural disaster, any terrorist incident or rape victimization. The victims of PTSD experience usually extreme stress and utter distress in their routine life which always disturbs their thoughts. They remind the traumatic events thus avoiding meeting with people and similar events.

In post 9/11 scenario, the novel depicts PTSD in major characters including Momo, Mutt, Bro Ali and their parents. The kidnapping of Bro Ali, bombing of their peaceful localities and devastating the natural habitat of their country has left the haunted by the traumatic memories and flashbacks from their past. American war-play has left the local inhabitants to suffer from PTSD, thus leaving them in a miserable condition. Instigated by PTSD caused due to above-mentioned traumatic events, the characters in the novel are always in mental agony and animosity towards Americans. The study presents a New Historicist critique of Post-traumatic stress disorder of the characters of the novel who are suffering from the traumatic stress, intrusion of repeated involuntary actions, avoidance of persons and places and flashbacks from the memories of trauma. It is done by selecting significant dialogues of these characters and passages shadowing effects of PTSD and analyzing the in the light of above-presented framework of the study. The term PTSD is incorporated in the analysis from a psychological perspective through which the characters in the novel suffer anxiety, mental pressure and emotional disturbance due to the some significant trauma happened in the past. The trauma haunts the characters throughout their life making their



life miserable and destabilized. After this kind of trauma, characters are always haunted by the flashback from the traumatic event and become anxious becoming like the patients of PTSD.

In the novel, Ellie is one of the characters who are facing PTSD. Ellie after his plane crash, roams in unmerciful desert, dying with hunger and thirst, finds the image of his wife everywhere in sun-burnt sand who runs towards with her arms spread ready to save him from the death. Throughout the plot of the novel, every major character of the novel is disturbed by abduction of Bro Ali, Momo's brother. This incident leave his relative in an utter state of despair and pain that they are always haunted by the miseries done to Bro Ali as in the following lines:

The day Ali was sold, he was dressed in black overalls but underneath he didn't forget to wear his Boss T-shirt. Of course, Bro Ali had no idea he was being sold. He thought he was being offered contractual employment at the Hangar with guaranteed overtime; most bright school graduates think life is contractual employment. I think life is a business opportunity. (Hanif 15)

The lines depict that Bro Ali was called to hangar to offer him an employment but unfortunately, he was taken to some unknown place from where he never came back. The victimization of missing person becomes so regular and common in the host societies that most of the families have lost their young children at on or other occasion and they never came back leaving their families in despair. They suffer from PTSD when they call their young kids where they used to play before being caught by American forces. In return, their families receive only the illusion and shadows of their kids. This phenomenon becomes so common that the desire of watching and luring their kids with the utmost affection remains a thing of distant past. In the novel Momo at a place expresses this agony in the following way.



A constant fear disrupts the peace of these person's lives whose living ones are kidnapped. They cannot enjoy the normal routine chores even eating because they are continuously chased by the pain and torture employed to the kidnapped children. Therefore, Momo is in a great distress and does not find any interest in taking food because he is fearful that his Bro Ali will surely be deprived of food and water as he says, "I can't live here and enjoy the comforts of the Camp while Bro Ali remains missing, living in some hellhole and God knows what they are gonna do with him" (Hanif 19). The invaded people also face a deception; American soldier betrays to local community on the name of employment to young men when they offer them that they will be employed for their daily livings but in reality those young kids are kidnapped and sent to unknown places. These unnamed places are only heard of but have not been seen by any local inhabitant because any local who goes there, never came back.

Momo's father works in hangar to facilitate American soldiers to find out their strategic targets for bombing. Many local inhabitants, who have lost their young children in kidnapping, come for help to Father Dear so that he may help them to retrieve their lost kids. But, it becomes a matter of utter disappointment when he cannot even rescue his own son. The writer satires bitterly and says, "Others come to Father Dear asking for his help to bring their boys back. These people are rude, they have no shame, asking someone who can't even bring his own boy back."

At another instance, Mutt presents the kidnapping of school going children with a gloomy face when it misses the school uniform cleaned and pressed, hanging in the room and waiting for the school child to be get it on and be ready for school. Unfortunately, those children are not coming back. This instance makes Mutt so stressed that it is unable to forget the pain behind this event. In the same vein, Ellie becomes disillusioned from the indoctrination of American war-play. He continuously focuses the exploration of reality fossilized under the false-flag American war-



play which induces kidnapping of children as their war strategy. He expresses his disillusionment when he says, “Your water-starved little brain is playing tricks on you. But if you find the spectacle too real, then walk slowly. Shut your eyes and open them again. Think of the children. Think of all the dying children in all the wars in the world” (Hanif 34). Momo is apprehensive of American superficial care for the victims of bombing. The brutality begins by bombing on the local people by destroying their houses, their livings and their means of earning. After devastating every nook and corner of habitat of local people, American government sends medical care for the patients and mentally traumatic persons. It always has been the way of thing of America that when everything has been devastated by the barbaric bombing, America sends medical teams for face saving in international community.

The novel presents a New Historicist critique on American aid and medical ventures to rescue the war victims when Momo bitterly criticizes Lady Flowerbody’s arrival to document the miseries and hardships of war-wrecked people in order to make a detailed report on PTSD as, “It was simple, they bombed us and then sent us well-educated people to look into our mental health needs.”(44). He is also apprehensive of the task of Lady Flowerbody’s presence in the refugee camps in the lines as, “First they bomb our house, then they take away my son and now you are here to make us feel alright” (48). American war-play works like a double-edged sword; from one end it cuts the innocents local inhabitants, with other, it attempts to pacify their rebellious sentiments by counselling them and to sooth them to make them feel comfortable.

The title of the novel significantly describes the phenomenon of PTSD. It is a matter of fact that thousands and thousands of innocent people are killed at the hand of America but the poor victims never retaliated because of a significant myth which prevails in the hearts of local inhabitants: every killed person is transformed into a little red bird which flies to sky after the



blood is dropped from the body of the killed person. Unfortunately, it does not stop here. Each dead soul transforming into red bird come back every day to revive the haunted memories for the past. It seems that they are killed but they never let the remaining people with peace. Those birds always haunt like the fragmented life events leaving people in a great distress. This regular haunting of killed person makes the living people suffer from PTSD. This phenomenon is beautifully narrated by Mutt in the novel in following way.

Similarly, the war that on one hand, has destructed the material assets of people while on the other hand it has stanchd the dreams of youth as well. The war torn people are suffering trauma because their future plans have been became an allusion by war destructions. These people are now only concerned to fulfil basic needs and moving from pillar to post in quest of wining bread for the their family members.

Momo deals with the trauma of losing his dream. This is how most grown-up men deal with their grief (p.53).

The most controversial misery of “Missing Persons” of the time has become a trauma for hundreds of families of the Middle East and the South Asia. This culture of missing persons is triggered by the state missionaries that abducted the suspected or the unwanted civilians. Unfortunately, the families of missing persons are unaware regarding the whereabouts of their dear one. Thus, most of the families of war front areas are suffering from the PTSD. In addition to this, in the time of advancement, in spite of development most of youth of these regions are admitted to rehabilitation centres or they became rebels and extremist. This unfortunate yet controversial reality is artistically presented by Hanif in the following lines: “I feel I’m gonna have to fix that. I am gonna have to bring him back. I am gonna have to abduct him from his abductors if I have to” (Hanif 73). Similarly, in the novel the Mother Dear, whose son has been abducted by American,



are in the influence of PTSD. Mutt describes the feeling of Mother Dear in these lines. “What she was really saying was bring me my son or go die, starve yourselves to death or go eat flour and raw meat. Or learn to cook your own food” (81). In the same passage Mutt further elaborates that “When Mother Dear does her daily laundry you can smell despair wafting through the washing line. She pours tears in her curry, so sad is that woman” (81). History is full of evidence that, the people who has been pressed to the wall by war in new world order, has left the hope of living. The only option left for them is to fight back. At this psychological stage people don’t bother to think about the lavish comforts of life. They made resistance as manifesto for the rest of their life. Thus it is true to say that PTSD plays a significant role in the era of new world order yet most of the war affected people is suffering from it.

Moreover, it is an unfortunate gift of new world order that PTSD prevails over the masses that either live within the war zones or live near war zones. They recognize the sounds of gun fire, war carrier crafts and bomb explosions. During or after war whenever they hear such sounds they recall all the miseries and destructions of war time. Therefore this trauma lives in their memories and haunts them throughout their life. Same is the case with the characters of novel. Though, bombing has been stopped for long time since they have experienced all tragic incidents and are not recovered yet are suffering from PTSD.

Another trauma that was brought by new world order is mental stress of generations who were born in camps and brought up there while deprived from standards of living. After 9/11 attacks and from beginning of war on terror US political cum military campaign half of population Afghanistan and Iraq where deprived from their houses and force to live in camps, the new generations who were brought up there are unaware of their ancestral previous lives style. They



face socio-cultural and identity crisis. In other words, the natives of these regions are labelled as refugees and this title will go through all their lives.

Last but not the least, the masses who are affected by the war damages have to train their beloved sons to die in the war fronts, while the parents who brought their sons up once had dreams to make them successful in their lives are now preparing their sons to die for the soil or in self-defense. From their sons an undue sacrifice is demanded from the war wagers. The trauma of losing their sons at parents end is proving as fatal for them. This unfortunate reality is depicted in the below mentioned lines from novel:

American War-play in the Novel and New Historicist Critique

American war-play is a critical tenant of the study devised to unearth the construal of American military endeavours as a “just war”. It explores the military ventures and hegemonic designs of America to invade the weaker states for material gains. It is one the major ingredients in her domestic and foreign policy to maintain economic stability and to safeguard its national interest abroad. As America is the biggest arms supplier in the world, it is mandatory for her to play an unending war so that its economy will flourish.

The war-play in the Middle East and South Asia were the practical implications of its policies. Similarly, America being a super power needs military bases in different regions that enables her to project power, influence activities abroad and conduct expeditionary warfare. Precisely, war-play is America’s strategic policy under the flag of her peace-making and rehabilitation missions in the countries it invaded. The phenomenon of war-play is commonly employed to invade those countries that are rich in natural resources, devastated by civil war, toppled by unwanted governments, drone attacks and carpet bombing on anti-American civilians



and arm-supply to rebellion groups to peruse its national interest and to maintain its hegemony in the global politics.

American war-play is one the major ingredient in its domestic and foreign policy to maintain economic stability and to safe guards its national interest aboard. As America is the biggest arms supplier in the world, it is mandatory for her to play an unending war game so that its economy will flourish. The war-play in the Middle East and South Asia were the practical implications of its policies. Similarly, America being a super power, it needs military bases in different regions that enables her to project power, influence activities aboard and conduct expeditionary warfare. Precisely, war-play is America's strategic polices under its umbrella it invaded countries that are rich in natural resources, triggered civil war in sates , toppled unwanted governments, drone attacks and carpet bombing on anti-American civilians and supply arms to rebellion groups to peruse its national interest and to maintain its hegemony in the global politics.

The novel unveils the American designs of war-play in war-torn countries. It is rich in anti-American sentiments and destructions caused by those designs. As it is a matter of fact that the history texts are full of appreciating the American version of war by documenting the successes of American army in war field and putting the innocent people under their brutal swords, a New Historicist analysis on the under hand, unveils the construal of war-play designs to expose the undocumented realities. For that purpose, significant chunks of the novel and apprehensive comments of the characters of novel are selected and analyzed through New Historicist lens. The interpretation of these passages reveals a critical exploration of political ideology behind the construal of war-play.

In the time and space of *Red Birds*, American war-play prevails. It unfolds the story of war-play in Iraq and Afghanistan. The following lines depict that America's war-play has always



supported war-play to make sure their presence in foreign soil in the name of military mission, for instance war on terror ,after war they establish rehabilitation programs through NGOs to cure people who face collateral damages, in any case American strategy to gain its interest in continuous progress.

The reality of the American war play is horrific to the other side of the coin as well. Though the war has been a politicized agenda throughout the history, but it becomes worst in the context of South Asia and Middle East. The narrator of the novel Ellie does not only present his own personal experience, but contextualize the real life dilemma of the American warriors in the Middle East and South Asia. There are two categories of warriors; one category is fanaticized by the American war play i.e. Colonel, the other category is disillusioned by the American war play i.e. Ellie. The extract below highlights that the American think tank is projecting their war game as a fantasy to the warriors. On the other hand, the narrator of the extract is disillusioned by the American war regardless of the fantasies associated with the war.

The war striven countries suffer more than the loss of the lives of the innocent people in the third world countries. Throwing the bombs and drone attacks derail the economy of the nations already fighting to meet the loose ends in their economy. The warfare activities destroy the limited resources available for poor people of the country. The American war game has put much at stake in the context of in the Middle East and South Asia. The narrator unveils the bloody face of America for its unjust and inhumane treatment of the poor subjects in the Middle East and South Asia, destroying their economic resources for nothing.

The narrator Ellie reflects the disillusionment of the warriors deployed in the Middle East and South Asia. He is not the only person who is a good and upright person who disillusioned by the war game in the Middle East and South Asian region. Ellie find himself at a dead end in the



American war game, because he believes that there is no hope left for him as far as he is present in the region fighting a futile and purpose less war. The condition of Ellie highlights a broader geo-political and social context of the American war play in the Middle East and South Asia. The extract below indicates that there is no hope for some many fighters like Ali as far as the stay in the region. Sooner or later, a time will come when they will start abandoning their homeland and defying orders of their seniors as traitors.

The American war play is a movement-based agenda propagated by the American think tank to channelize the underlying ideology in the war. The colonel's statement unveils the actual purpose of American war in the Middle East and South Asia. The propagation of war for war sake agenda is basically the economic gain of the American nation because the revenue and the finances of the military and the economy of the country largely depend on the war machines and war activities. The following excerpt unveils the above mentioned the real world context of American war in the Middle East and South Asia:

The modern war in the post 9/11 era has shifted from the geographical planes to economical planes where the purpose of the nations is to grab the economic resources than the lands of the countries. It has been the economic agenda of America in the context of Middle East and South Asia. Their agenda highlights their political stance in making the barbaric people civilized on the one hand and utilizing their resources on the other hand. This has been the real-life situation of the Middle East and South Asia since 9/11.

Findings and Discussion



This section deals with the findings of the study conducted on the novel *Red Birds* through New Historicist perspective. The findings of the study address all the research questions of the study.

The major findings of the study are as following:

1. The study unveils the biographical and historical background of the Middle East and South Asia that inspired Mohammed Hanif to write this novel. The experiences of the indigenous people in the war striven region are well understood and experienced by Mohammed Hanif in war on terror in post 9/11 era.
2. The experiences of the indigenous people in the novel unearth the materialistic and political designs of America in the real world context of the Middle East and South Asia.
3. The characters of the novel such as Momo and Mutt highlight the suppressed voice of the local people against the hegemonic and economic pursuits of America through war game in the region.
4. The way traditional events are narrated by the US to defend the American war on to establish a new world order is countered by the new historicist analysis of the study to highlight the actual social, political, cultural and economic conditions of the people in the Middle East and South Asia.
5. The American narrative of a better and safer world for the people under the flag of new world order is also challenged through new historicist analysis. The analysis reveals that this slogan is strategic and political tactic to curtail the power of those people who challenge the hegemonic designs of the US instead of an agenda for a better world.
6. Most important of all, regardless of the excuse of the US for a better world order for a better future, the abuses of war result in the post-traumatic stress disorder for the people in different ways:



- 6.1. Momo, the protagonist of the novel, is the voice of so many people suffering from the trauma of war because so many people were unable to channelize their dreams into realities. Moreover, he has lost his brother Bro Ali.
- 6.2. Mutt, the dog, also suffers from PTSD because it has lost its leg in the bombing. It feels that he has become alienated from his family relations, love and affection. The character of Mutt entails the sad and bitter reality of the PTSD because of the American war play,
- 6.3. The character of Mother Dear also suffers from PTSD because of the kidnapping of her intelligent son Bro Ali. The PTSD has disturbed her domestic life. Mother Dear entails the sorrow of so many mothers who are suffering from PTSD in the real world context of the Middle East and South Asia and the history of the region is full with an innumerable number of such happenings related to missing persons because of the American war game.
7. The character of Ellie, an American soldier, also suffers from PTSD regardless of the fact that he is there to wage war against the indigenous people. His sufferings after the plane crash, home sickness and disillusionment personify a wider socio-political dilemma of the American soldiers in the actual after effects of the war on the American warriors as well. Ellie is also the voice of so many American soldiers who have suffered from PTSD in their own in the context of Middle East and South Asia.
8. The analysis highlights the ground reality of American oppressions in the region for the purpose of hegemonic control over the people to gain geographical and economic benefits in a larger scale war with the world super powers such as China and Russia.



9. The finding of the study also highlights the dialogic tension in the conversation of the people in their everyday life through the dialogues and conversation of the characters in the novel. For example, the dialogues of Momo, Mutt, Mother dear and Father Dear are typical instances of an unconscious problem prevailing in the lives of the indigenous people in the Middle East and South Asia.
10. In the last finding. The analysis of the text from the perspective of new historicism in terms of war play highlights the real-life conditions of the American soldiers and their mental agony in the context of the Middle East and South Asia.

The analysis of the study has shown a New Historicist exploration of socio-political, cultural and material background in which the novel has been written. The new historicist analysis has revealed that the novel is not just the fictitious account a historical event rather; it portrays the sufferings of common people, dialogic tension, and post-traumatic stress disorder in the events, dialogues of characters and narration of events such as Momo, Ellie, Mutt and Lady Flowerbody etc. Most important of all, the new historicist analysis also reveals that to events pen down in this story magnify the actual and real sufferings, trials and tribulations of the indigenous people due to political, economic and hegemonic war game played by America in the third world countries.



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Echoes of Oppression: Women and the Mother Earth in Kashwar Naheed's

Poetry

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Abstract

The research explores the parallel relationship between women's oppression and the exploitation of nature. Grounded in Susan Griffin's theory of ecofeminism, the study critically examines the *Selected Poetry of Kashwar Naheed* translated by Derek M. Cohem and Baidar Bakht. Focusing on the internal conflicts of women and the physical exploitation of nature, the study interprets that women experience a deep identification with nature, as both are subjected to domination and commodification. Utilizing qualitative textual analysis, the study focuses on literary devices to show how literary symbols reflect both environmental degradation and the marginalization of women. Juxtaposing Naheed's poetry with the ecofeminist stance, the study highlights the role of patriarchal society in the exploitation of marginalized beings like the female gender and nature. In this way, the research seeks to uncover ecofeminist perspectives in lesser-studied poetry by women writers from the Global South, demonstrating how the textual portrayal of nature and women can challenge and resist systems of commodification and control.

Keywords: Eco-Feminism, Gender Oppression, Exploitation of Nature, Patriarchal Regimes

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Introduction

The study navigates the maltreatment and interconnected relationship between female gender and nature in Naheed's poetry through the lens of Susan Griffin's theory of ecofeminism. In the context of Griffin's ecofeminism, the text traces the relationship between women and nature because they both face abusive treatment from a male-dominated society. Naheed compared darker natural imagery, like death and night, with the female gender. In postcolonial Pakistan, Naheed, as an indigenous poet, exposes the exploitation of marginalized communities and challenges the erasure of the female narrative in Pakistani literature, emphasizing how the female body is persistently denounced in male-dominated writing (Ramiz, 2023).

As a marginalized gender, women's perspectives are essential to capturing the complexity of internal conflicts. Naheed's poetry reveals these inner struggles and turns to nature for solace, drawing parallels between the oppression faced by women and the exploitation of nature in a patriarchal society. In the ecofeminist narrative, nature is regarded as Mother Earth, a nurturing force that provides comfort to humanity, particularly to women.

The research aims to determine how the oppression of women is intertwined with the objectification of nature. The condition of the same oppression and exploitation creates an intimate bond of friendship between nature and woman. Phallogocentric society suppressed women to maintain its control over them. The male gender is considered superior to women and animals, and that's why men treat women and nature as inferior beings (Griffin 1998). Griffin argues that whenever a woman raises her head, she is reminded of the tradition. The grass mower highlights Griffin's concept of raising the head. A mower cuts the grass when grass grows, which means a grass mower cuts grass heads when they rise. Naheed sketches the feelings of a woman with the exploitation of ecology. The patriarchal system shaped and controlled females as well as nature.



She compares the male appearance with the horrific objects and causes of psychological trauma of women. The research highlights the shared qualities of grief and friendship between the woman and ecology.

The study is guided by the research question concerning the type of connection Naheed creates with nature and the kind of subordinate behavior shared between nature and women. The research paper analyzes the intersection of women and nature, as they both are marginalized. Naheed exposes the harmful effects of societal expectations and injustices on women. She used many natural images, such as moulted wax, night, and deadly water, to convey the woman's internal conflicts and their similar resemblance to nature. Men are not closely associated with nature, as they do not experience the forms of marginalization and deprivation endured by women and nature. A woman develops both internal and external bonds with nature, finding comfort in its presence and engaging with it as a confidant.

Earlier research on Naheed's poetry has been done on the Marxist, political, and religious discourse. All topics of female existence and political discourse in the era of Zia-ul-Haq have been explored in Naheed's poetry. All the above-mentioned discourses, which reveal the exploitation of women by men and political systems, interrogate the very existence of women in Naheed's poetry (Haleem, 2023). The following research significantly enhances the understanding of Naheed's poetry with a novel interpretation of Eco-feminism in the context of Pakistani patriarchal society through the female narrative by conducting a deep analysis of literary devices and symbols. The research project contributed to the new perspective of a woman's relationship with nature as a healer and friend. The research's findings will contribute to the discourse of female existence and its similarity with the ecosystem because the exploitation of women and nature is now a major concern of the literary canon. The study can expand the



theoretical lens about the interconnectedness of females and nature through which Pakistani indigenous narrative poetry can be interpreted.

Methodology and Frameworks

The article presents an in-depth analysis of Kishwar Naheed's poetry. Susan Griffin's theory of eco-feminism is used as a theoretical framework to trace the interconnectedness between women and nature. The primary text used for this study is the '*Selected Poetry of Kishwar Naheed translated by Derek M. Cohem and Baidar Bakht*'. Naheed's poetry showcases the marginalized situation of women in a patriarchal society. Griffin's theory showcases the close relationship of the female gender with nature. The study highlights the resemblance between the exploitation of the female gender and the degradation of nature. The study traces instances of parallel connections between women and nature through literary devices, while also examining how patriarchal society shapes both the female body and nature to conform to male-dominated expectations. The object of the study is to identify patterns or trends in Naheed's poetry to explore how it reflects marginalized perspectives, ecological narratives, and patriarchal regimes.

Literature Review

Naheed extensively wrote against Gen. Zia's regime. Zia has promoted the concept of militant Islam and changed the entire nation into a group of fanatics (Qasim, 2023). Women faced subjugated treatment from the patriarchal society and writings. In male-centered writings, women are always portrayed as a bad omen and villains (Ramiz, 2023). However, the female narratives respond to the patriarchal society. Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz write against the state oppression and patriarchal suppression of the female gender. Naheed creates a separate



bond between ecology and suppression. She connected patriarchal regimes with the marginalization of females and nature at the same time.

The history of the subjugation of women and nature is as old as the history of the universe itself, and eco-feminists have been criticizing gender inequality and environmental injustice since the 20th century (Batool, 2023). Women and nature both are considered nourishment for humanity, and in return, they get the fury of patriarchal society. Furthermore, in a patriarchal society, the male gender is considered superior to all other genders. In contrast to the patriarchal trend, Naheed chooses the topic of resistance against female marginalization in every sphere. She highlights the role of the female gender in society and her connection with nature. Women need to be recognized as decision-makers, not decision receivers, and nature should be free and not be guarded by society (Susan, 2016). Griffin's theory of eco-feminism argues for the separation of nature and women from the male gender. Naheed also demands the separation of the female gender from the male.

Rosemarie Tong, in her *Ecofeminist Perspective of Woman and Nature*, highlights that women are treated as naturalized and nature is treated as feminized. The woman is naturalized when she is treated as a cow, bitch, old bat, cat, snake, etc., and nature is feminized when she is worshipped as the greatest mother of humanity (Tong, 2022). There is a close-knit relationship between women and nature, and they are interchangeable and interconnected with each other. Whatever humans do to nature, they also do it to women. Eco-feminist demands the liberation of both classes because one relies on the other. Tong argues that eco-feminists should strengthen women's attachment to nature. Naheed also establishes the link between women and nature through her poetry.



Results and Discussion

Similar Ways of Exploitation

Patriarchal society exploits women in the name of tradition and exploits nature in the name of beauty. Griffin highlights the 'pairs ecology and gender' and 'draws a connection between the oppression of women and degradation of the environment'. The depiction of grass and mower follows the Griffin aspects of 'pair ecology and gender'. The grass is used as a metaphor for the female, and the mower symbolizes the male gender. Naheed mentioned that "The grass is like a woman, whenever it lifts its head, the mower cuts it down, softening it into velvet, just as a woman lowers her head each time she dares to raise it." (*The grass is like me*, p.140). Through this metaphor, she captures the persistent suppression of women's agency under patriarchal dominance. As soon as grass raises its head, mowers cut its head off.

Correspondingly, the females do not have the power to raise their voices against the patriarchal society, just like the grass cannot grow longer. The poetess mirrors herself with the grass and examines whether the grass is really like her. They both cannot live according to their choices. Ecofeminist criticizes the male gender, and Naheed also gives cruel attributes to the male gender. The mower is a symbol of cruelty and fake promises. He abuses the grass under the name to make it more beautiful, like velvet. The female notices her reflection in every piece of nature. The rising head symbolizes the resistance of both nature and women against the harmful patriarchal system.

The Ocean is Just a Tear projects Griffin's ecofeminist view of the exploitation of a female and nature by the patriarchal society. Griffin highlights the parallelism in the sequence of natural order and female life span. The poetess compares a decade of her life to a season, writing,



“I have witnessed all seasons of my life; my fate was like a night and descended drop by drop to the fireplace, yet it still smiled amidst the burning logs” (p. 198). The season symbolizes the ups and downs of her life, and it explains the strong bond of a female with the Earth. The tree and the woman are exploited, but no one takes care of them. Griffin, as an ecofeminist, explains that nature and females both bear violence and physical torture from the patriarchal society. In the poem, night symbolizes the horrific downfall, and the dry roots of the tree symbolize the body without a soul.

Women have endured life in a male-dominated society for years, much like a trunkless tree standing on bare ground. The poetess draws a parallel between the trunkless tree and the tormented woman, suggesting that both trees and women are violated by society and now stand together like siblings. The fireplace served as a metaphor for a male-dominated society, while the burning logs symbolized the female life journey. Through the eyes of Griffin’s ecofeminism, the poem shows that women, trees, fire, and logs are interlinked and face the same violence in the phallocentric society

In *The Puppet Show*, Naheed draws a striking comparison between the worn-out soul of women and the beaten state of death and a dead fish. She writes, “death taking a bath in the river, her body is more beaten and sagging than a female, but her body seems shining like a fish in the water. Fish has a rendezvous with the net and fishermen, loses her beauty, and becomes old” (*The Puppet Show*, p. 416). The use of personification in the poems creates more pathetic effects. Poetess gives the human attributes of bathing to death and creates a link between beaten death and a torn female body. The net symbolizes the patriarchal chains, and the fish symbolizes the female body. The fisherman is portrayed as a destroyer of nature and a female. Nature and women are helpless in front of a male-dominated society.



The fish exploited in the water and female troubles in the phallogentric society. Moreover, the poetess gives natural references to show the submissive relationship between eco and feminism. The fisherman does not allow fish to live long; he puts his net into the water and steals the freedom of a fish. Likewise, society kept the female in the patriarchal net where the female has no liberty to live according to her choice. The poetess used visual imagery like death takes baths, beaten bodies, and shining fish to highlight the ill-treatment of the patriarchal system of the marginalized communities, including animals and females.

Intimate Relationship between Women and Nature

Anthropomorphism is used to elaborate on the affectionate relationship between the poetess and the night. Griffin concludes that women have a more intimate relationship with nature. The portrayal of the poetess's encounter with the night reflects an intimate exchange: *"One day, night comes to my room and sits on the empty chair. Night laughs loudly and says that women have the misconception that they are incomplete without men, whether a male is made of stone or wood"* (Pepper on My Tongue, p. 504). Anthropomorphism is a literary device that gives human acting skills to non-human things. In the following stanza, night sits on the empty chair and starts talking to the poetess. The night symbolizes a guiding light that teaches her to look around her and think about the completeness of her soul. The night draws attention to the acceptance of violence and exploitation. The night mocks the woman who regards the male gender as her saviour, regardless of whether he is good or bad.

The poetess seeks liberation in nature. The tormented woman turns to nature to soothe her sufferings and struggles in life. The empty chair symbolizes the hollow space in the heart devoid of joy or pleasure. Any dreadful presence can occupy such emptiness, just as the night occupies the empty chair. This image reflects the inner void of a woman whose life revolves



solely around her husband. The laughter of the night signifies the closed-mindedness of women who remain within the confines of their comfort zones. Through this encounter, the night imparts a lesson of resistance, aligning with Griffin's view that both nature and women seek support and affection from one another.

The study traces the link between natural objects with the psychology of a woman, just like Griffin explains that the natural object is closely relatable to the female. The relationship between melted wax and pale women evokes a gothic effect, drawing attention to the fractured cognitive development of the female gender. Naheed writes, "I do not want to talk to a pale woman who is living inside me. I always ignore her, but she is like the wax of candlesticks. Whenever I try to throw her out, she is like molten wax, burnt by my fingers, leaving a spider's cobweb on them" (*Insomnia*, p. 412). This imagery conveys the persistent and painful presence of an oppressed self that cannot be easily discarded, mirroring the psychological entrapment of women in a patriarchal society. The heightened emotions describe the poetess meeting with the supernatural pale woman.

The pale woman symbolizes internal conflicts, desires, and fears, while the molten wax represents the inescapable patriarchal chains that prevent a woman from freeing herself from these fears and desires. The poetess attempts to cast away the pale woman, a manifestation of her inner horrors, but the molten wax burns her fingers. Suppressed emotions and societal pressures take a toll on the woman's mental health. Bound by the dictates of a phallogentric society, the poetess is unable to free herself from the pale woman. In *Insomnia*, the poetess compares her fingers to autumn-smitten branches, her tears to water, and wax to sea foam. The verses establish parallel connections between women and nature through imagery.



Griffin's ecofeminism navigates the earth as a motherly figure that satisfies the needs of women. In the poem *Before Turning to Dust*, Naheed seeks refuge in Mother Earth by envisioning herself transformed into poisoned water: "I want to make friendship with death. I want to turn my life into poison water, and you take the life of Methuselah; I prefer death over life" (558). Naheed demands poisonous water to remove all her worries and sacrifice her life. The poetess shows respect for death, as Griffin shows the interconnectedness of women with nature. Allusion is used in the poem to refer to Methuselah (Khizar Hayat).

Methuselah symbolizes long life, and every man wishes to live long. On the contrary, women do not want to live longer. The poetess describes the desire of a man who wants to live and fight against cancer. A woman, on the other side, refuses to live anymore. The woman does not wish for a long life, as her existence is fraught with hardship. The poetess contrasts poisoned water with honey and milk, suggesting that what is typically seen as poison is, for her, a soothing balm for the soul. By drinking it, she will embrace mortality. While poisoned water is considered harmful to men, it becomes a source of liberation for women.

Conclusion

The analysis of Kishwar Naheed's selected poems through the lens of ecocriticism unveils a profound interplay between the female experience and the natural world. Women and elements of nature, grass, fish, wax, trees, and fire are united by a common narrative of oppression under patriarchal power structures. Vivid metaphors and striking visual imagery portray internal and external struggles of women, aligning them with the exploitation of nature. In doing so, Naheed not only criticizes the phallocentric order but also reclaims the female voice within literary discourse. The male is portrayed as an exploiter, and the poetess gives the first place to the woman and nature. Phallocentric society is metaphorically presented as a jungle full



of animals, and the female is presented as a peacock or a cutting green grass. Research on the experience of the female gender through interconnectedness with nature may enhance the ecofeminist narrative in the Indigenous poetry of the global south. The study develops the merging of Griffin's idea of ecofeminism with Naheed's notion of body politics. By blending personal, political, and ecological concerns, she challenges the invisibility imposed on women and nature. Future scholars are encouraged to engage the different works of Pakistani Urdu poetry with the Western narrative of Griffin's Eco-feminism to enhance the perspective of women and nature in indigenous poetry.



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Is Woman Fragile? A Comparative Study of Pakistani Primetime Dramas

Khalil ur-Rehman's *Meray Pas Tum Ho* and *Sinf e Ahan*

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Abstract

This research comparatively examines the projection of women in two Pakistani primetime dramas *Mere Pass Tum Ho* and *Sinf-e-Aahan* to explore the diverse representation of Pakistani women in digital media. It also discusses the role of gender within the two dramas and their respective evaluation of sociopolitical structures and intersectional identities of women in contemporary Pakistan. Expanding on intersectional feminism's focus on various dimensions of identity, this research elaborates the layers of the characters' experiences in both dramas. Mehwish in *Meray Pass Tum Ho* intends to acquire wealth and prestige by getting married to a rich man whereas; *Sinf-e-Aahan* unveils the lives of five female cadets from diverse backgrounds as they join the Pakistan Army. It is a drama that portrays the strength of women and diversity and speaks of women's ability to come out of the bondage of stereotypical roles and succeed in presumably male-dominated professional fields. Employing intersectional gender theory, this paper analyses how the TV drama "Sinf-e-Aahan" subverts clichéd imagery, portraying empowered women. This study highlights the significance of employing gender theory as well as

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intersectional feminism in media texts' analysis. The analysis reveals that male writers tend to portray women as materialistic, weak, and overly emotional characters whereas female writers portray women as strong, independent, and decisive who can take a stand for themselves by challenging traditional roles. It makes a note of the importance of different stories, which deconstruct the cultural norms of gender expectations and present different facets of every woman. Thus, this juxtaposition of *Mere Pass Tum Ho* and *Sinf-e-Aahan* offers a perspective on the shift in Pakistani dramas and examines how they can contribute to changing or shifting public perception of gender and identity construction.

Keywords: Intersectional Feminism, Pakistani Dramas, Gender Expectations, Media Analysis

Introduction

Gender theory addresses how literature informs, encodes, and subverts cultural paradigms of gender. Gender focuses on the parts of the individuals, their actions, undertakings, and characteristics, which a certain society expects from men and women. Thus, gender theory as one of the methods of analyzing literary texts is aimed at finding out how gender roles are constructed and represented in literature or how they could be changed with the help of literature as one of the important aspects of studying gender identity and the relationship between genders. In gender theory, analysis involves studying how a given literature depicts the dominant patriarchal culture, especially in violating the rights of women. Gender theory deals with whether these various characters, especially women, are given the power of speech and decision-making within the story. They seek to know whether they are performing the roles of the characters in the story or are depicted as mere objects on which the actions and glances of the males are focused.



The theory raises questions about how literary works support or subvert the dominant beliefs, for example, that women are weak and should be obedient to men or men are powerful and rational by nature. It also seeks to establish the way characters act by or violate the projections made from them.

Intersectional Feminism is a theoretical perspective of how women interact with feminism taking into consideration how they are privileged or disadvantaged depending on the social categories they come from and the social categorizations they experience. The term, used for the first time by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a specific concept in 1989, evolved from the contributions of black women who demonstrated the shortcomings of both feminist and anti-racism movements in their capacity to fully account for the experiences of women of color. Intersectional feminism understands that people have a range of identities that vary in race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, and nationality. This intersection of identity means that some people experience oppression and privilege in specific ways.

Intersectional feminism aims at seeking all forms of equality for women regardless of their race, color, ethnicity, ability, or any other features that make them minorities. This emphasizes the policies and programs that should be undertaken to help those categorized under these groups gain equal consideration or support as other women. By incorporating intersectionality at the core of its activism and policy work, it ensures that those with marginalized status have their needs met as well as acknowledged and supported. Although a lot of work has been done on intersectional feminism in India and Western parts of the world, Pakistani dramas discussing intersectional feminism did not receive sufficient discussion by the authors regarding the double marginalization of women.



Menon (2015) opposes the Western intersectionality frameworks, as these do not address the experiences of marginalized Dalit women and their complex caste-class-gender oppressions. She also describes the high level of plight and discrimination of Dalit women in Indian society. She points out that Dalit feminism is generally not aligned with mainstream Indian feminism due to perceived upper-caste bias. Gökarıksel (2017) describes how Trump vilified immigrants, Muslim people, women, African Americans, Native Americans as well as transgenders. As a result, women and civil rights supporters staged one of the most massive protests in the history of the United States, “raising their voices against the walls, hatred, and deportations embedded in the global turn to the right and attempting to embrace an intersectional feminism that recognizes racial, ethnic, religious, class, and other differences”.

Keeping in view the work of Indian and Western authors, this study aims to highlight intersectional feminism prevalent in Pakistan and highlighted in Pakistani primetime dramas. Murtza (n.d.), in her paper highlights the intersectionality of the caste system, gender hierarchy, colorism, and racism, particularly in the context of Pakistan. She discusses intersectionality in Pakistani culture through the voices of the victims, whereas this paper discusses this issue through the voices of actors. Nasir (n.d.), discussed one of the famous dramas *Ghisi Piti Mohabbat* in her paper. She used liberal feminist theory as a theoretical framework for her study, whereas current study is based upon intersectional feminism in Pakistani dramas. Although she also explores double marginalization faced by the protagonist due to her ethnicity and social background, yet the author only explored women empowerment in the drama.

Noor (2024) conducted a comparative analysis of two Pakistani dramas by employing Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis and Beauvoir’s notion of feminism as the



framework of the study. Her paper focuses mainly on gender stereotypes whereas the current study discusses intersectional feminism along with the representation of gender in both dramas.

Materialistic Womanhood in *Meray Pass Tum Ho*

The story about Danish and Mehwish is depicted as a happy family of three who are living a humble life with a small kid named Rumi. Danish is a government officer and even though he does not have much money in his pocket, he has no problem with that and has great affection for his wife. While getting married to Danish, Mehwish aspires to buy a better car and a fancy house, things Danish cannot offer.

Mehwish's dreams compel her to accept the party invitation, which is thrown by Mehar Bano, shown as Anoushey. At the party, she gets acquainted with Shehwar Ahmed, a handsome extremely wealthy, and extremely self-possessed businessman. He starts being affectionate and buying her expensive gifts. While Danish initially believed in his wife, he noticed the coldness between them. Mehwish gets trapped by the beauty of Shehwar and then starts making relations with him improperly. Shehwar agrees to provide her with the lavish lifestyle she longs for, and after much deliberation; Mehwish decides to dump both Danish and Rumi for Shehwar. Naturally, this is the final straw that completely breaks Danish, as not only his wife and family are no longer with him, but the entirety of his previous life is turned upside down. Danish 'failure in love leads him to find a purpose in life and embark on the quest of self enhancement and financial gains. He then quits his job at the governmental organization and begins a new career as a share trader, becoming an overnight millionaire. From a man who is hardworking and honest, to a ruthless businessman who had tricked his way to becoming a multimillionaire, Danish is a changed man yet he is devastated by Mehwish's betrayal.



On the other hand, problems start emerging for Mehwish who is in life in relationship with Shehwar. Maham (Savera Nadeem), Shehwar's wife, comes back home after she is living abroad and steps into Shehwar's business sector. Danish's rejection of Mehwish is very realistic, genuine, and touching. He continues to be adamant, especially on the issue of the broken trust that they had and the pain he endured because of her. Mehwish is then left alone to suffer for her sins which she now sees as her mistake.

Shehwar gets arrested for fraud and mismanagement of funds, and Maham kicks Mehwish out of the house. Not having anyone in her life now after Shehwar left her alone, Mehwish goes back to Danish only to be turned away by him. The last episodes reveal Danish in a bad condition because of health issues largely related to stress. But as far as the plot development and character depiction are concerned, one sadistically notices the effect that Mehwish's betrayal had on him: Even after becoming a wealthy successful man, the torments of the heart have rendered him a severe emotional wreck. The entire drama ends with Danish's tragic death, and Rumi and Hania are left heartbroken to mourn his loss.

Revisiting Gender Roles in Sinf -e- Ahan (Women of Steel)

"Sinf-e-Ahan" depicts the story of multiple daughters of different families with no similarity and completely different backgrounds, all joining the Pakistan Military Academy to undergo a course of training. It familiarizes the audience with their backgrounds and hardships, how they survive in a military that is predominantly male, and how they evolve as people and as soldiers. Every character has his or her story that is an accurate depiction of the wide range of people inhabiting Pakistan.



Rabia Safeer (played by Sajal Aly)

Rabia is from a well-off background in Islamabad, Pakistan. She has a father who is an officer in the security forces, while her mother is a homemaker. Rabia has had a privileged upbringing but does not want to be confined solely by expectations that others set for her. She goes to fight for her brother who was killed while serving in the military.

Mahjabeen Mastaan (played by Kubra Khan)

The story is about Mahjabeen, who is a modern Pakistani woman residing in Karachi and passionate about pursuing her career independently. He is well-educated and has a liberal background. Her decision to move on and join the army is met with some disappointment by her mother who believes the military is not a place for her daughter. The plot of Mahjabeen's story comprises her fight and determination to show her capacity for endurance.

Pariwesh Jamal (played by Ramsha Khan)

Pariwesh was born raised and belong from Balochistan a province of Pakistan that is known for being Politically unstable and conservative. She also experiences many forms of discrimination, and her economic status is far from ideal. These prompt her to join the military out of a desire to free herself from the constraints placed on her by her ethnic heritage, as well as to honor her family's name.

Shaista Khanzada (played by Yumna Zaidi)

Shaista is from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where cultural practices about women are very rigorous. This is specifically seen when she decides to join the army which goes against the traditional roles expected from women within that setting. Through Shaista's character, the show



depicts the external and internal struggles of women seeking individual freedom amidst highly patriarchal societies.

Arzoo Daniel (played by Syra Yousuf)

Arzoo is shown as a part of the Christian minority in the drama. She does not only complain about the racism she faces but religious persecution and prejudice she tries to cope with. However, she remains determined to serve her country.

Nathmy Perrera (played by Yehali Tashiya)

Nathmy is a Sri Lankan cadet who joins the army in the drama through an exchange program. Her character brings a sense of interdisciplinary unity focusing on the fraternity of women discriminated across national territories. The show also addresses the ethnic, religious, and socio-economic diversity of the country by representing characters of different origins. This attitude of inclusion speaks volumes of the drama's message of solidarity through embracing differences.

Mere Paas Tum Ho, despite provoking a lot of controversy amongst the conservative group of Pakistani society, received a significant number of viewers during the period that the play was aired. "As we stepped into 2020, a television phenomenon had gripped the nation. With over 325 million views on YouTube, and the finale screened in cinemas, Mere Paas Tum Ho has set new records in Pakistani television drama" (Mustafa). However, such a huge response from the audience does not ensure that the writer was aware of the culture and traditions of Pakistani society.

The drama depicted an extramarital affair between two characters that faced huge backlash from the critics. "Many others claimed this type of controversial drama misguide our



generation and they tried to emerge the western culture in Pakistani society” (p. 36) (Shakir).

This controversy also reached the courts of Pakistan when “Sindh High Court summons Humayun Saeed over Meray Paas Tum Ho's offensive dialogues” in January 2020 and “another petition had been filed in a Lahore civil court earlier this month to halt the release of *MPTH's* double finale” (Baloch, 2020).

Similarly, Ali (2015) sought to establish the nature and extent of representation of female characters in two study areas belonging to media: print media and audio-visual media. Therefore, in the result section, the researchers have argued that the media has focused on portraying women as morally corrupt to smudge their image in the real world. Ahmed (2019) also studied the portrayal of woman protagonists in Pakistani feature films. The research study designed in this case was qualitative in which the researcher adopted the textual analysis approach as well as the feministic framework. The study further showed that the female characters were properly categorized respectively as the protagonist, the antagonist, and the prostitutes.

The main female protagonist of the film is Mehwish who is portrayed as an unchaste, selfish, and adulterous wife and wife who deserts her good-tempered and earnest husband for financial comfort. It is especially apparent in the portrayal of women of interest as vengeful and materialistic, motivated solely by greed and infidelity, leaving the audience with a very reductive view of women even though women are far more multi-dimensional. The drama's narrative is quite masculine and has a bias toward a male figure, where female characters or issues are sidelined. Such imbalance helps perpetuate the patriarchal mechanisms that provide dignity and value to women based on their subservience to their male counterparts, hence encouraging regressive and gender-biased views. “Most of the time women have been misrepresented and are even labeled as “contested”. They are often represented as negative, rebellious, and evil, which



makes women appear as negative character has overcome their real image in society. The real strength of women's character and personality is often subsided or ignored.” (Alvi, 2015)

Another research study by Rasool (2022) examined the screenplay by comparing this drama to two other drama screenplays of Pakistan named “Dil Ruba” and “Mohabbat Tujhe Alvida” (p. 1211). They have also categorized MPTH with many other Pakistan dramas which “show women's negative image and project them as greedy and materialistic” (Rasool, 2022). In other words, “when objectified, women are treated as bodies-and in particular, as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others” (Fredrickson, 1997). Most of the dialogues by male protagonists, especially in MPTH, not only point towards the objectification of the females but also come under slurred speech which not only damages the character of women but also denies them the dignity that they deserve as sensitive human beings.

Some critics question the content of MPTH by saying “We question the making of certain dramas that got famous on star power and only God knows what! With content THAT questionable and storylines so loopy – we are unsure how the actors agreed to do them even if the directors and TV channels forgot what a good story should portray.” (Hussain, 2022). He even questioned the intent of the writer saying, “it concerns us if it was even made for just entertainment purposes.” In another article, Sharda (2014) says “In television serials, an ambitious career woman is often portrayed as ‘greedy’ while men tend to be portrayed as ‘go getter.’ With a few exceptions, the mainstream media usually perpetuate these stereotypical gender divisions.” According to (Rasool), women in Pakistani dramas like MPTH are depicted as

- “Women as ungrateful, ostentatious and talkative
- Women as a rehabilitation center for badly raised, ill-mannered men
- Projecting the 'ideal' wife material



- Women as frail and gold diggers.
- Infidel man is worthy of redemption, but women damned to eternal damnation.”

Talking about the writer of MPTH, (Isani) writes, “KRQ has time and time again proven himself to be a bitter misogynist with little to no respect for women and zero tolerance for an opposing opinion. As a writer, and someone who has the window to influence the masses through television, the man’s mindset is his real problem.” Since Qamar is already an influential social figure in the entertainment industry, it can be inferred that his opinions and shares have a certain impact on the public. Continuing to paint women in an unfavorable light and belittle the problems that female advocates address, he participates in fostering such a patriarchal mindset. Qamar has posted and shared several obscene thoughts about women on social media and speaking engagements. For instance, he has directly targeted some of the feminist movements such as the Aurat March in Pakistan, and has insulted most women activists and feminists. His spiteful remarks tend to be directed toward women, specifically those who are striving to be equal to men and demanding changes to unfair gender roles. From the incident, one could deduce that he had a lot of hatred for women given the language he used to address Marvi Sarmad “Your body, your choice? Look at your body. No man would even spit on it” He then proceeded to call her a bitch and asked her to shut up, repeatedly.

“Traditional gender stereotypes can be reversed with the change in the mindset of nations of the world and the media can play an important role in portraying such change in society and inculcating the ideology of reverse gender roles in the minds of people.” (Ward, 2020). Sinf e ahan is an example of such an ideology. “In the Pakistani context after a long war of hatred on the topic of male oppression of females. The drama Sinf-e-Ahan is just like a breath of fresh air.” (Fatima Chaudhary). The drama depicts the transformation of traditional domesticated women to



the new women with the reverse gender roles positively and in a balanced manner. The key feature of this drama is its positive tone recalling the cooperation of males and females to erase hatred aspects regarding Pakistani subcultures such as Pakhtoon or Balochi cultures that were unsympathetic to women.

The effect of this drama is to paint a relatively positive picture when it comes to the advancement of the nation. This drama from the first episode to the last has truly depicted Pakistan women's realistic situation and provides a balanced message that through determination and teamwork of both sexes, all kinds of problems can be resolved without bringing animosity and aggression in Pakistan society. That is why this drama has been presenting a favorable view of Pakistan and its people internationally. "Now as the time is passing the gender roles are reversing. Women are performing different roles in every field. Women have started working, going to offices, driving cars, and have even become pilots, and managers of international 128 firms, thus reversing the traditional male role." (Razzaq, 2022). "These women are headstrong in their respective manners, and they also come from different cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, a facet of the drama that I appreciate very much. It is so important that our dramas, and even films, have representation that reflects the very real diversity within our people." Mubashir (2021) in her news article appreciates the diversity of cultures shown in the drama and how each character has her reasons to join the army and she stands for it. In another news article, the author says that the drama challenged the notion that only men can join forces or that women are physically incapable of adopting such professions saying, "While there's nothing wrong with the desire itself, it becomes problematic when it's gendered."

Parents rarely wish the same for their daughters. They can either be doctors or engineers or choose teaching and this school of thought emerges from the ill-perceived conception of



women being the 'weaker sex'. It internalizes that young girls and women cannot be part of professions that require physical and mental strength, hard work, courage, and perseverance.” (baig) Nadeem Baig, the director of *Sinf e* then added, "After this drama, the girls will think, 'Why can't we join the army? We should join" which shows his intention to “dispel the stereotype of only boys joining the army”, as stated in the article. While many of the authors appreciated this drama for showing the brilliance in women, some criticized the stereotypes prevalent in the drama. “*Sinf-e-Ahan* showcases the Pakistani military as a beacon of hope for women escaping the shackles of a patriarchal society. It is portrayed as a fair meritocracy, where discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and religion is non-existent. Afreen (2023) says in her article that “lying in the crevices are the grim realities of this haven.”

The grim realities she discusses applying militarism are, “the incompatibility of femininity with the military and de-individualization that a recruit goes through in the military”, evident in the dialogue of Pariwesh where she says “I’m not your daughter anymore, I’m an army officer now”. She also discusses some examples of sexism and misogyny in the dialogues of male cadets as trainers. She says that “the drama shows military training will transform the fairer, weaker sex, into women of steel. Why this implication is problematic needs deliberation. Of course, it demonstrates the sexist view that women are “*Nazuk*” or fragile, but it also suggests that it is after military training that women become empowered, which is a much skewed representation of empowerment.” She further adds, “This dismissal of work done by women in the kitchen, and around the house, as unimportant is a very strong patriarchal tactic that aids the subjugation of women”. Another author criticizes Umera Ahmed’s “*Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan*” saying, “The author might be portraying the real picture here, but she is affirming



women that they are destined to be a speck. They are part of this patriarchy to bear injustice, inequity, and tyranny of the demons of the society”. (Dar, n.d.)

However, this drama not only depicts female empowerment but also discusses how female subjugation is dependent on other factors like class, ethnicity, culture, race, etc. By exposing how socio-economic status determines opportunities and response in the academy, Pariwesh Jamal embodies the challenges of ‘having it all’ with inadequate resources and social acceptance as a working-class woman. Shaista Khanzada can overcome the cultural barriers because the traditional part of the Patriarchal culture is still dominating in her region, showing extra challenges for women from patriarchal societies. Lastly, Arzoo Daniel faces a problem of religious discrimination; gender and religious identity influence their experiences. Still protected by the privilege of her socio-economic status, Rabia Safeer struggles with internal pressures that stem from being expected to live up to her family’s military standards. She has had different hurdles, but they are not much less, talking about her hardships: Privilege does not mean no difficulties, only different ones.

It gets each character’s narrative across allowing for diversity representation in the series giving exposure to ethnic minorities and persons of lower economic capabilities. The daily life of the cadets shows that community discriminations manifest themselves differently regarding each subject’s race, gender, and sexual orientation. Contrary to Khalil ur Rehman Qamar, one of the prominent features of Umera Ahmed’s female characters is that she gives them depth and dimension, making her characters multi-dimensional. They are not depicted merely as female characters with male partners, but they are individuals with their own goals, abilities, and vices. For instance, the characters of Kashaf, from “Zindagi Gulzar Hai” and Umama from “Pir-e-Kamil” are represented as hardworking, strong-willed women who have a lot to undergo and



achieve despite all the odds. Concerning the themes, most of Ahmed's works are focused on the need for women's education. Her characters focus on the goals related to education and career as the way to gain the status of a successful, independent woman. In the novel *Shehr-e-Zaat*, Falak the protagonist comes across a journey of finding her self-identity and learns that true spirit and education are way more important compared to beauty and expensive possessions. "There is no hero in [#Sinf e Aahan](#)" was an Instagram caption by Umera Ahmed showing her pride in the absence of male protagonists in her drama *Sinf e ahan*.

Good Woman vs Bad Woman

This research is based on the qualitative method and therefore the rationale for opting for this specific paradigm is that the paradigm permits the researcher to gain a vast understanding of the phenomenon under research. Qamar has portrayed Mehwish, the female protagonist of *MPTH*, as a materialistic and greedy woman depicted in the dialogues of the male characters. "And you try to remember! How badly you were chasing me, talking about big dreams and after marriage, you have put me in this small flat. (Mehwish from the drama "*Mere Pass Tum Ho*" episode 2)

The above dialogue shows how Mehwish tries to belittle her husband and criticize the flat they are living in and not providing the luxuries he promised to her before marriage. Her language portrayed the image of weak women who are likely to be lured by men who promise them good lives and rich futures. Women's image is projected as ungrateful by uttering these dialogues.

"I have dealt with the anti-corruption department as well and I don't fear them either. Besides the necklace, I'm also thinking about purchasing Monti's car"



These lines represent women a kind of gender whose happiness is equivalent to the material possessions they own. To meet social responsibilities as well as to fulfill the needs and wants of women, males need to adopt unethical ways. Through the character of Mehwish, all the lady characters are portrayed as emotionally greedy and incite their husbands to do immoral things to get what they want. In this scene where Mehwish tells her husband that she wants a necklace and a car to get a better status in the society Danish is willing to earn quick money even if it means doing wrong things and even if he risks being arrested. It is depicted in such a way that there are always women who are behind men's crimes.

“She is an ill-mannered woman; she doubts a lot! If she were here, she might have caught him with his collar. She would be mad if she had seen him with Maria, then she might have started shouting that you are flirting with your secretary.” (Dialogue from MPTH)

Married women are depicted as overly critical and have a feeling of mistrust in their husbands. Some of the stereotypical behaviors and characteristics that are attributed to them include being judgmental and emotional. Women are expected not to express any hostility or anger when they find out that the males cheating on them and if they do, they are social misfits. Shehwar Ahmad's wife is said to be mannerless for insulting him when she found him flirting with a secretary. She does not meet the cultural norms where a woman is expected to be submissive, patient, tolerant, and just a spectacle observing whatever the husband does.

“A girl feels overjoyed when she is heavily priced by a trader/dealer like you” (digital. tv, 14:49, Epi11). In the subject of gender objectification, this portrayal of a woman implies Fredrickson & Roberts' (1995) assertion that Women's Bodies Are Looked at, Evaluated, and Always Potentially Objectified, p. 175). Endorsement of such abusive remarks by Shahwar and Danish



prolongs all through, thus reinforcing females' status as mere objects in the context of Pakistani traditional domain.

Shahwar: I can offer you 50 million"

Danish: For what?

Shahwar: For divorcing Mehwish. [15:08, Epi 11]

The above exchange between two main male characters in the play MPTH shows that the playwright is very sure that the people of Pakistan will not ban him from writing further plays for national television networks although Qamar has received much criticism from some sections of Pakistani society that are pro-feminist.

"You seem to be an intelligent businessman. However, you have shocked me here while pricing her. You were offering 50 million (PKR) to purchase this worthless girl." (35:24, Epi 12)

These words Danish are probably the most illustrative example of how Qamar substitutes a woman with a saleable object. While Qamar makes use of male characters to objectify and commodify women, Umera Ahmed comes across as relatively more empowering and articulate for a female protagonist. Danish directly addresses Shahwar at different places which means that Mehwish occupies the position of a free woman at a very low standard.

"Did you spend unpaid time with him? How stupid of you! I, though his wife, did not live with him without payment. He pays me five million per month even when I live in America" (03:54, Epi 20).

The conversation raises the issue of how Maham links her value and the connection with the salary and other material benefits. This is a commentary on the societal notion that



materialism brings about the degeneration of interpersonal relations and the general moral fabric. By saying that she did not live with her husband without payment, Maham simply turns marriage into a business transaction with no regard for the bond shared between the couple or morality. This representation may lead to the continuation of demeaning attitudes toward females as being motivated solely by money in relations. This statement erodes the sanctity of marriage and relations.

“Ask him if God can forgive why can’t he forgive? There have been several such cases where a person remarried the one he divorced, why can’t he?”

“Divorce happens in marriage, not in love, and marriage, infidelity is enough to change a man. And if there would be forgiveness for infidelity, then wouldn’t men become God?” (Mere Pass Tum Ho, Episode 22, 25:25-26:20)

This line “Then wouldn’t men become God?” makes the men look more imposing than needed and degrades women as helpless in front of the men. This speech and linguistic feature see men as God, which contributes to an unbelievably ordained altar of chauvinism.

This utterance provides a clear and amplified message to the infidel women that they cannot achieve redemption by any man. However, this text does not say much when it comes to punishment for the same sin committed by men. This absence of male figures and constant explicit portrayal of only women’s sins portrays the domination of males over females in this discourse.

Much like MPTH, another Pakistani drama “Humsafar”, "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and "Mad Men" (American TV Series), all these promote women as good, pure, self-sacrificing women or as the source of evil and family breakdown. These narratives are



still retaining and continuing the patriarchal norms and do not much portray the real and diverse aspects of womanhood and their potentialities like Mehwish depicted in “Mere Paas Tum Ho.”

On the contrary, *Sinf e ahan* represents that women are not only oppressed by men but also by class, race, ethnicity, and culture which causes hindrances in the way of their success. This drama shows different challenges faced by women of different backgrounds and how they cope with them. By applying the theory of Intersectional feminism, we will analyze the drama and its dialogues.

“We’ll have to change our stories and their names at least for my daughter, I can’t have marriage as a final prize because marriage isn’t the ending of a story”

As a result of the stories from magazines and other forms of mass media, women are put into a position to believe that their main purpose and goal in life is to find a husband and be set in life. Contrary to this perception, this dialogue discards this conventional notion fully and makes us believe that there are many things to do us in life rather than just marriage. It is necessary to raise powerful narratives and reconsider the female characters and the norms and practices of what has been taking place. In such ways, their minds could be transformed, and future generations made to be fully independent.

“I want to create my own identity, not just be known by my brother's name.”

Rabia is a high-class woman from a rich family, and her brother being a soldier in the army gives her another status. She’s unable to make for herself an independent life away from her family which strongly depicts gender issues and roles within societies. This dialogue highlights her struggle to escape the figure of her brother and be an individual, to be recognized for her accomplishments.

“Being a Pukhtun girl, it's not easy to join the army, but I can't give up on my dream”.



Shaista's character brings out the intersection of gender and cultural identity. She had social barriers too due to her strict Pukhtun culture of conservatism. This is evident in her dialogue as she struggles to conquer cultural norms to chase her dreams, a reality that cements her double oppression since she is a woman of color.

“The hardships at home have made me strong, I will make my place in the army”.

“In Balochistan, girls are taught household chores more than education, but I want to build my future”.

Pariwesh also signifies the intersection of class, gender, and culture. Socio-economic factors also play a role in her life; she comes from a less fortunate background in Baluchistan, and her struggle to succeed despite limited resources economically is a result of her desire to succeed as a woman and a Pakistani.

“I am proud to be a Christian, and I will prove that we are also a part of this country”.

Gender and religious identity are introduced through the captivated character Arzoo. Besides this, she is a Christian who lives in a country where the majority of the population follows the Islamic religion which also contributes to her suffering. The dialogue shows off her strong religious beliefs and her fight for her place in society, and in the nation.

“The friendship between Pakistan and Sri Lanka is also evident in the army”.

As an international cadet from Sri Lanka, Nathmy contributes to the dimension of internationality and revitalizes the values of nationality in harmony with gender. They also show the barriers and sisterhood that cross national borders and the multiplicity of struggles that are associated with being a woman in the exchange program.

“My mother says that girls shouldn't be so free that they forget their limits, but I want to understand the true meaning of freedom”.



For instance, Mahjabeen from a liberal background in Karachi still experiences traditional culture pressure from her mother who thinks there are certain barriers when it comes to the freedom of a girl. The conflict in Mahjabeen's military experience is about asserting her independence and fighting the cultural oppression one sometimes receives from their loved ones.

Findings

The comparison of the dramas "Mere Paas Tum Ho" and "Sinf-e-Ahan" concerning the representation of women and the use of the intersectional feminism approach presents a set of differences. Therefore, it can be concluded that the representation of women in "Mere Paas Tum Ho" (MPTH) is negative as the drama portrays the women in the show as materialistic, cheaters, and weak. On the other hand, "Sinf e Ahan" does portray women progressively and liberally; women in the drama hail from different backgrounds and are depicted as strong, capable, and tough in a completely male domain like an army.

The fact that the story's climax revolves around Mehwish's betrayal and the consequent downfall of her family serves as an example of how the Pakistani drama reinforces the patriarchal norm of women as unfaithful and disobedient. Not only does this representation deceive the viewers but also reinforces gender stereotyping which is highly degrading to women and their potential in society. On the other hand "Sinf-e-Ahan" About the typical stereotypical portrayal of women in Pakistani films, breaks off as it portrays a group of women who are a part of the Pakistan Army. These characters are from different socio-economic, ethnic and religious groups and the challenges that they meet and the cultural barriers they encounter differ.

From Rabia Safeer endeavoring to win justice for her martyred brother, Mahjabeen Mastaan demanding the right to work, to Arzoo Daniel standing up to religious bigotry the depiction of women is complex and diverse. These dialogues and storylines show how gender



and other social identifications such as ethnicity, class, and religion are composed, thus providing a complete and rich explication of women's excellence.

Like *Sinf-e ahan*, "Hidden Figures" is a biographical drama film of 2016 that portrays how the characters grapple with racism as well as sexism, like the women of 'Sinf-e-Ahan' who struggle with cultural and socio-economic constraints. Some Indian movies like "Darlings", "Thappad" and Hollywood movies like "Wonder Woman" depict women empowerment through their characters. Another famous Pakistani author Bapsi Sidhwa discusses the cultural degradation and marginalization of Hindu widows in India in her novel 'Water'. (Khan) has also shed light on this novel in her paper, "An Intersectional Feminist Reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's Water".

Audre Lorde's "Sister Outsider" is a vital contribution to intersectional feminism consisting of essays as well as speeches that have touched upon race, gender, sexual orientation, and the issues of class. She also notes that the current mainstream feminism movement does not have a structure or incorporate experiences of all the women like women of color and marginalized groups. Another Pakistani drama "Ghisi Piti Mohabbat", depicts characters from various ethnic backgrounds and gender conflicts, coupled with ethnicity and class differences. The socio-political drama "Sang e Mar Mar" analyses ethnic and class barriers as well as gender through the narration of a Pashtun woman's life. This shows us how within this ethnic group, men use tradition and class matters to cage women thus depriving them of their freedom.

Conclusion

The critical examination of the dramas "Mere Paas Tum Ho" and "Sinf-e-Ahan" within the framework of intersectional feminism shows the extent to which media portrayals affect how people perceive women and men within society. In specific, Intersectional feminism which



asserts that women are more than just their gender and that gender intersects with numerous other aspects of identity is imperative in capturing the heterogeneity of women and how they experience their worlds differently. Unfortunately for many, ‘Mere Paas Tum Ho’ sends out regressive messages and paints a highly prejudicial picture that is reminiscent of toxic masculinity and consists of demeaning depictions of women. On the other, “Sinf-e-Ahan” is about women’s tribe and represents a beautiful message of women’s power, variety, and spirit.

Lastly, through an analysis of these interactive dramas from the lens of intersectional feminism, it becomes clear that media should evolve from presenting women in such ill-minded ways. When media integrate intersectionality, more realistic and positive images of women are portrayed as the experiences of women are not homogeneous. This shift has not only empowered women and proven women's rights, but also opened and changed the commonly held perceptions of society about gender issues. Examples such as comparing the drama “Mere Paas Tum Ho” to “Sinf-e-Ahan” reveal that although the stereotypical representation of women is still present, we see the emergence of change towards depicting women better in media. It is necessary to create more media content, which encourages gender equality strengthening, which carefully describes the experiences of women and their roles today, and contributes to the development of an equal society.



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