PAKISTAN
Here and Now

Insights into society, culture, identity, and diaspora

Edited by
Harris Khalique
Irfan Ahmad Khan

Rivets Learning

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In memory of

Ashfaq Saleem Mirza
(1944-2020)

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Foreword

Most of us have seen more 'change' in our lifetimes, than many of our previous generations combined. We moved from villages to cities, learnt to speak Urdu and English, used cars and electronic appliances, travelled abroad, communicated through mobile phones, accessed information on internet and benefited from anti-biotics, vaccines, and other advancements in medical science. Our access to foreign music, food, dress, and other lifestyle choices increased dramatically shaping our aspirations and expectations from life.

Such drastic changes in relatively short amount of time have not manifested without their problems. As our society goes through the birth pains of an emergent social order, we feel torn apart by the polarizing influences of various ideas – old and new – that shape our perceptions and practices. These include those about ourselves, and those about the world out there – creating contradictions and fault lines, both within us and the society. Our ability to comprehend all this and evolve mechanisms required to resolve these contradictions will determine the direction this impending process of change takes.

'Pakistan Here and Now: Insights into society, culture, identity, and diaspora' – published by Rivets Learning – is an attempt to do just that.

Through its seven essays, the volume provides us with views on different aspects of life that delineate the dilemmas and contradictions faced by the contemporary Pakistani society. These include ideas on identity, gender, religion, politics, and

economy. How has our sense of belonging evolved? How are gender relations affected by these changes? What role does religion and its various interpretations have in our lives? How power and resource distribution affect social stratification? And most importantly, how do we depict our society and its many contradictions through various art forms?

For someone like me – who hailed from a small village in Mansehra, a district in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, got to experience life in major metropolitan cities abroad, grappled with some of these issues studying towards a PhD at Oxford, and works as the Country Director of a leading international think tank – this discussion is extremely relatable. Having returned to Pakistan after more than a decade abroad, these perspectives are immensely enriching and have deepened my understanding of the 'self' and the social life around me. I am sure that many others who have experienced similar transformation in their lifetimes will find it equally useful.

The book is edited superbly by Harris Khalique and Irfan Ahmad Khan. Khalique is one of the leading intellectuals in the country with a keen eye on social change and persistence. I have personally benefited enormously from his insights during our late-night discussions. I am glad many of these nuances will now enlighten a wider readership through this book. Also, authors of respective essays are some of the leading lights in their respective fields. A common feature in their essays is the freshness of their analysis and lucidity of their expression, making this book extremely easy to read despite providing serious food for thought.

Thankfully, unlike some recent work on the issue, the narrative here is not 'ahistorical' or 'apolitical'. To the contrary, it beautifully explains the contemporary realities through their roots in the events and ideas that originated at various points in our known and unknown history. This, in itself, is a major contribution to knowledge that in particular will help bridge the disconnect that a younger audience at times feels when pondering over the most basic of questions:

'Who am I?'

As poet Bulleh Shah famously said, *Bullah ki jaana maen kaun?* (I know not who I am) – it is through expeditions like these that we take a step forward towards knowing.

Adnan Rafiq, PhD
Country Director Pakistan
United States Institute of Peace

Editors' Note

The purpose of bringing out this volume of essays is to fulfil our desire to study and debate the contemporary society and culture of Pakistan, without isolating them from the continuum of history. At one level, Pakistani society is considered comparable to other contemporary Muslim-majority societies. Particularly, when we study the inherent and emerging social contradictions and the issues embedded in their diverse forms of cultural expression. Pakistani society becomes unique when we investigate its deep-seated anxieties surrounding matters of national, sub-national, religious, and sectarian identity. However, burning topics around current political tensions – examples being extremist violence, the turmoil in Balochistan, and weak economic and political governance – may not have explicitly been described because the authors see these issues as inevitable consequences of the dominant narratives and expedient policies in our history. Besides, there is no claim we make of comprehensively covering everything in one volume. Subject to its reception, we may consider bringing more voices to the table. Since the country has a huge diaspora residing across continents, there is also an attempt to look at how the thoughts of this diaspora vis-a-vis the native country are shaped, and then, at times, manifested through specific actions.

Pakistan boasts a rich tradition of art and culture, and linguistic and ethnic diversity. Besides, a sizeable part of its population subscribes to an age-old mystic narrative which encourages peace and plurality. Politically, the regions that constitute Pakistan have witnessed colonisation from the middle of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century with about another one hundred years of lurking British presence preceding their direct rule. Since its independence in 1947, the country has

suffered from both military dictatorships and authoritarian politics. In the face of these hardships, the civil and political society of Pakistan have put up resistance to oppressive regimes. They have also made advances through various struggles waged by political workers, labourers, women, journalists, writers, and lawyers. Nevertheless, Pakistan remains a fragile and controlled democracy – irrespective of having a fairly workable Constitution which defines it as a federation with a parliamentary form of government. It must be acknowledged, though, that even this quasi-democratic order is something which many other Muslim countries are still struggling to achieve. However, over the last three decades Pakistan witnessed a rapid radicalisation in society and promotion of bigotry and obscurantism, making it even more difficult for the country to consolidate its democratic gains.

Unfortunately, bigotry and obscurantism were systematically encouraged by our elite-captured state's ill-conceived and short-sighted policies, which in their view would have brought considerable material and strategic gains. To compound matters further, after 9/11, the contemptuous view of Islam and Muslims resulted in radicalising Muslim populations even further. We have witnessed violence and bloodshed in the name of faith – both religious and sectarian – rising to new levels across the Muslim world, including Pakistan.

More recently, after countries like US, Brazil, Turkey, Philippines and India, Pakistan has also seen the spread of right-wing political populism. Perhaps the difference between other countries and Pakistan remains that the rise of the current populism in Pakistan could not have been successful if not aided by sections within the permanent establishment of the state: judiciary and military. With these various socio-political actors at work, and being in the midst of multiple regional conflicts, Pakistan presents an opportunity to study the prevailing radicalisation in Muslim societies that induces extremism, which further leads to violence, and eventually to acts of terrorism.

We shall also remember that something distinct about Muslim societies is that they were all subjected to either colonial rule or overt western political and economic domination for a long period in history. Therefore, mostly it is the 'colonial-cum-postcolonial' lens that is used to view the social and political developments in these societies. To better comprehend the thought patterns and their consequent physical events in Muslim societies, there needs to be an investigation that emerges from within. For instance, religious extremism is primarily perceived as a security issue – particularly in case of Pakistan – instead of being seen as a broader ideological conundrum. Hence, the body of literature available on the subject is useful but lopsided. As a result, the solutions proposed comprise short-term, security-related policy options and corresponding institutional reforms. There is little understanding and analysis of these issues in a broader historical perspective. Much more is needed to decipher the interplay of external discourses with local narratives of diversity and inclusion.

This book in your hands is a humble contribution towards problematising the subjects of society, culture, identity, and diaspora from a progressive perspective and through comprehensible writing in the form of free-flowing essays backed by a close reading of history, so a wider readership can access the narrative being offered and arguments being made. Some authors have indeed used provocative arguments in their own voice and style that we have not tampered with. No matter how critical they are, all of them are committed to the vision of a tolerant, inclusive, and plural Pakistan. It is neither intended nor expected that a reader will agree with each and every word written in this volume. But it is certainly desired that a reader will begin to look at things more critically and start thinking about the past and present of Muslim societies in general, and Pakistani society, in particular.

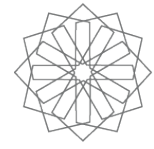
We must acknowledge that the primary credit for this publication goes to our illustrious contributors: Zahida Hina, Prof Navid Shahzad, Salman Asif, Dr Naazir Mahmood, Hasan

Zaidi, and Fatimah Ihsan. All are highly prominent in their fields of work and study with some of them internationally recognised. They have definite convictions and wide circles of influence. Here, they may appear to have formed a motley crew of sorts – filmmaker, actor, teacher, journalist, cultural commentator, educationist, and creative writer – with different ages and backgrounds. But what binds them together is their passionate concern for creating a healthy society. More interestingly, most of them still simultaneously play or have played the different career roles mentioned above at various stages of their lives. This makes their insights cosmopolitan, diverse, expansive, and intriguing. There is a palpable sense of urgency in these writings which demands deep introspection and an earnest conversation to begin at all levels within Pakistan and abroad.

'Pakistan Here and Now' is being published simultaneously in English and Urdu. Six essays were originally written in English and one in Urdu. Saqlain Shaukat made the Urdu version possible by diligently translating the six English essays. Syed Hussain Sajjad provided us with an idiomatic translation of the one Urdu essay into English. The Rivets Learning team led by Zeeshan Noel Christopher and including, but not limited to, Bilal Abbas, Ather Nadeem Qureshi, and Sawera Naazir with the team from United States Institute for Peace (USIP), Imran Khan and Saadia Sabir, extended invaluable intellectual and administrative assistance. We are thankful to all of them.

Harris Khalique & Irfan Ahmad Khan

May 2021



Certain Uncertainties
The cultural confusions of Pakistan

Hasan Zaidi

As you drive south-east down Khayaban-e-Shaheen (Falcon Boulevard) in Pakistan's largest independent housing society, the military-controlled Defence Housing Authority in Karachi, you come across Khayaban-e-Ittehad, or Unity Boulevard. Once you cross Unity Boulevard, you enter DHA's still fairly new Phase 8 sector. Construction in Phase 8 was launched only in 1998 and it is still largely undeveloped. So the first thing that strikes you is the large tracts of empty land, reclaimed from the sea, on either side of the road, and the wide open empty spaces. What might also strike you, if you are paying attention, are the names of the roads that cross your path as you drive down Phase 8.

The first cross-road is named after the 13th century Subcontinental Sufi poet, scholar and musician Amir Khusrau (1253-1325). This is followed by Khayaban-e-Tariq, named after the Berber Muslim general Tariq ibn Ziyad (670-720)

who conquered most of Spain in the early 8th century. Then comes Khayaban-e-Qasim, named after the Umayyad military commander Mohammad bin Qasim (694-715) who, as a 17-year-old, is credited with creating the first Arab foothold on the Indian Subcontinent and conquering parts of Sindh in the early 8th century.

Next is Khayaban-e-Rumi, named after the Persian Sufi mystic, theologian and poet Maulana Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273). After that comes Khayaban-e-Iqbal, named after the 20th century poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) who is credited with having dreamt of the creation Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. Drive further down and you will come across Khayaban-e-Khalid, named ostensibly for the early Islamic period general Khalid bin Waleed (592-642) who conquered large parts of Iraq and Syria.

Continue further down and you will come across Khayaban-e-Ghalib, named for the 19th century Delhi-based poet considered among the foremost poets of Urdu. Right after comes Khayaban-e-Babar, named after Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur (1483-1530) the Turkic founder of the Mughal dynasty in the Indian Subcontinent. Beyond, you will find Khayaban-e-Faisal, named after the Saudi king (1906-1975) and Khayaban-e-Tipu Sultan (1750-1799), named after the Muslim ruler of the southern India state of Mysore who became a symbol of resistance against the British colonialists.

Your journey will end on Zulfiqar Street 1, named after the sword of the Caliph Ali, which bounds the elite DHA Golf Course on one side.

If you had driven down other roads in the same direction, you might also have come across Khayaban-e-Khyber, named for the fort that occupies an important place in early Islamic history; Khayaban-e-Ghaznavi, named for Sultan Mahmud Sebuktagin of Ghazni (931-1030), the Afghan general who became the first ruler of the Persianate Turkic dynasty in north-western India and who invaded and plundered the

richest towns of mediaeval India 17 times; Khayaban-e-Arafat named either after the Saudi mountain which has a sacred place in Islamic tradition or the Palestine Liberation Organisation's first leader Yasser Arafat; Khayaban-e-Shajar (Tree Boulevard) an eccentrically neutral name in the middle of the rest; Khayaban-e-Saqib (who it's named after is not exactly clear); and Khayaban-e-Bilal, named for the companion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was an Ethiopian slave who had been set free and who also occupies an exalted place in Islamic history.

When I drive down this area, I often find myself imagining the dynamics of the planning meeting when these names were being assigned to the major roads of the new sector. In essence, there are three major categories of those being honoured here: poets, generals and kings, and all from Muslim history. Let alone that there is not a single name indigenous to this part of the land or of a woman that is considered worthy of being honoured, what strikes me perhaps the most is the haphazard convention of naming.

It's not like all the poets and mystics were in one area and the warriors or rulers in the other. Rather, the competing interests in the names lead me to imagine that there were perhaps two or three groups lobbying for names of their choice, with the more dovish poetry group on one side, the warrior group on the other, and a smaller group pushing for royalty. In my imagination, the meeting was probably rather anarchic, with each proposing side getting what they could, wherever they could, and compromises being struck over which side got to name which boulevard. Once in a blue moon, there might be a sop to a marginal group as well (the pro-environment Shajar group, the Saqib-promoters perhaps).

It's an amusing thought exercise, but I propose that this bit of anthropological evidence is actually indicative of the competition within Pakistan for defining what Pakistani culture is. This is a see-saw battle that has been carried out since the establishment of the country and, in the normal dynamics of discourse, would not be anything out of the ordinary.

However, it is the unresolved nature of this debate and, indeed, the lack of even basic consensus over the frameworks for the discourse, which allows a hodge-podge of competing ideas to exist in a state of post-modernist anarchy. In that, the seeming desire to find a connection to and roots in everything other than the local and indigenous is also a particular source of confusion.

This essay will argue that the problems of radicalisation in a country like Pakistan are intimately connected with the confusion at the heart of notions of the nature of the state; that it is precisely this lack of clarity that creates the space for extremist thought to assert itself, perhaps because it promises a cultural certainty that is dearly missing from the state.

A culture in flux

In 1985, a Muslim sectarian organisation sprang up around the town of Jhang in central Punjab, which would go on to define not only sectarian politics in Pakistan but also influence regional extremism throughout the region, such as in Afghanistan and the disputed region of Kashmir.

Although the origins of the Anjuman-e-Sipah-e-Sahaba (Association of the Soldiers of the Companions of the Prophet [PBUH] later renamed as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan) were in the resentments of the largely Sunni peasantry and an urbanising population against the power and influence of the area's Shia feudal landlords, it used sectarian rhetoric to rile people up against their alleged exploiters. The morphing of a class and socio-economic issue into a purely theocratic one not only gave it a certain cultural legitimacy in a state where the use of religion for political purposes was accepted, but made tackling it all the more difficult. It did not help, of course, that those in power at the time – the military – saw in the manufactured cultural legitimacy a way to take on secular political forces and to use it to spread its vision of religiosity within the country.

The inability of the state to tackle this hot-button religiously tinged issue led to the Sipah-e-Sahaba not only becoming a

potent electoral force but also an openly violent one, leading to the massacre of many minority Muslim Shias, especially in the late 1980s and 1990s. The Sipah-e-Sahaba and its affiliates (including breakaway factions such as the even more hardcore Lashkhar-e-Jhangvi and militant Deobandi Sunni outfits such as Jaish-e-Mohammad) also supplied many of the foot soldiers for the Afghan Taliban and for the militant uprising in India-held Kashmir – helping spread the reach and influence for the jihadists – until they were banned as terrorist organisations by the Government of Pakistan in 2003.

However, the Sipah-e-Sahaba basically changed names (Millat-e-Islamia, Ahle Sunnat wal Jamaat, etc.) and continued as before. Even today, the Sipah-e-Sahaba continues to operate as a legitimate political party (Rah-e-Haq Party) and also contested the 2018 elections and the Gilgit-Baltistan elections in 2020.

The hardline outlook of this virulently sectarian party does not only have an impact on Pakistan's politics and security; it has an outsized impact on Pakistan's popular culture as well. Its creed often goes unchallenged in the media or in general open discourse, and seeps into discussions in other matters as well. When any dissent with them can be misinterpreted and lead to charges of blasphemy (which carries a death sentence in Pakistan since the 1980s) or even a violent death at the hands of a vigilante mob, most people will prefer to self-preserve and keep quiet. In addition, the exigencies of the powerful military's jihadist doctrine in the region often preclude any decisive action against it. The end result is that extremist positions are circulated without challenge and more space is created for similarly extremist positions.

Most people of my age, and certainly those older, will recall how Pakistan was a very different – certainly more pluralistic and perhaps more tolerant – country before the 1980s. There may be disagreement, of course, about what the turning point was, but one thing is quite clear: the culture of a country is not static; that it can be changed over time.

Sometimes that change is organic, for example through urbanisation, through change in material circumstances, through demographics and connectivity through increasing globalisation. But sometimes that change can also be fashioned, through state patronage and/or the inability or unwillingness of the state to intervene when an existing culture comes under assault.

This, of course, leads to the question of how is culture, and more specifically Pakistani culture, defined.

What is Pakistani culture?

Inevitably, issues of culture cannot be separated from issues of politics, and this is particularly true in the case of a country ostensibly formed on the basis of religion.

There are those who define Pakistan as an Islamic state – with all of its attendant ideological imperatives – and there are those who see it a country created primarily as a homeland for a Muslim minority who faced the threat of discrimination within an undivided India, but as a secular state.

There is evidence, of course, that the country's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, did not imagine Pakistan as a theocratic state and explicitly warned the new nation against going down that route.

In an oft-quoted speech, his first presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, on 11 August 1947, he said:

> You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State…. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens, and equal citizens, of one State…. We should keep that in front of us as our ideal, and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus, and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each

> individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.[1]

On 19 February 1948, he had said in a speech:

> Make no mistake: Pakistan is not a theocracy or anything like it. Islam demands from us the tolerance of other creeds, and we welcome in closest association with us all those who, of whatever creed, are themselves willing and ready to play their part as true and loyal citizens of Pakistan.[2]

A week later, he reiterated this point:

> In any case, Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state – to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims – Hindus, Christians and Parsis – but they are all Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan.[3]

However, since Jinnah died within a year of the country being established, he could not stamp the newly founded country with his vision in the same way as, let's say, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk did on Turkey or Ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia. There is also a valid counter-argument about how secular a country formed on the very basis of religion can be. The trajectory of Pakistan's vision about itself has, therefore, lurched between two competing understandings of the state.

As early as March 1949, a mere six months after Jinnah's death, Pakistan's Constituent Assembly passed the Objectives Resolution, which was contested even at the time as being against the ideals of Jinnah.

Its biggest declaration was to imply that Islam would be the state religion of Pakistan. For example, it referred to 'sovereignty over the entire universe [belonging] to *Allah Almighty alone* [emphasis added] and the authority which He has delegated to the State of Pakistan, through its people

1 G. Allana, Pakistan Movement Historical Documents (Karachi: Department of International Relations, University of Karachi, nd [1969]), pp. 407-411.

2 Jinnah: Speeches and Statements 1947-1948 (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

3 Ibid.

for being exercised *within the limits prescribed by Him* [emphasis added]'; 'the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice *as enunciated by Islam* [emphasis added]'; 'Muslims [being] enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and *requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah* [emphasis added]'; and 'adequate provision [to] be made for the *minorities* [emphasis added] to freely profess and practise their religions and develop their cultures.'[4]

Of the 69 members of the Constituent Assembly at the time, 38 members were not present when the Objectives Resolution was adopted on 12 March 1949. All 10 non-Muslim members had expressed reservations about the mixing of religion with politics but their amendments were voted down by the 21 Muslim members present. All non-Muslim members seized on the emphasis laid on a state religion as being repugnant to the idea of an equal citizenship.

Later on, the Objectives Resolution would be made a substantive part (as Article 2(A)) of the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, through Presidential Order No. 14, promulgated by the military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq in 1985.

Conservative religious lobbies have often cited it as the basis for demanding that the state take action against certain practices or to justify certain actions, such as the 1974 declaration by the parliament of Pakistan, which outlawed the Ahmadi community from professing itself as Muslim.

The point to note here is not the merit or demerits of the Objectives Resolution – on which much has been written already – but the fact that the contestations of how Pakistan was to be defined have a long history. These contestations have never been fully addressed, much less resolved.

These contestations have been most visible in the battle for defining 'Pakistani culture'. Is there such a unitary thing

4 http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1434604126_750.pdf

in the first place or is it a collection of the separate lived realities of the constituent peoples of the territories known as Pakistan? Although various attempts have been made to assert the latter point of view by left-leaning thinkers and cultural activists, inevitably there have also been challenges to them, which continue to rely on the impetus of religion, centralisation and 'patriotism' to fashion another narrative that sees the country threatened by centrifugal forces – which are all too often identified with any assertion of diversity or indigenous cultures.

Can Hindus, Christians and Parsis, for example, be considered part of 'Pakistani culture' if Pakistan is defined as an Islamic Republic? Are Sindhi and Baloch cultures mainstream Pakistani culture? West Pakistan's refusal to accept East Pakistan's Bengali culture as an equally valid representation of Pakistani culture already led to the breaking up of the united Pakistan in 1971 but, sometimes, it's not clear if lessons were ever learnt from that tragic episode. Are music and dance un-Islamic and therefore outside the pale of 'real' Pakistani culture, as many within Pakistan claim? Is the diaphanous, midriff-baring women's garment the *sari* simply an Indian import? What about denim jeans? Is Bollywood cinema, watched, understood and enjoyed by millions in Pakistan, simply a corrupting influence on Pakistani culture, as many within the religio-political parties believe and as even the current prime minister has asserted? Is Anglophone writing in Pakistan, often making waves internationally, really representative of Pakistani culture if it is written in a language only a few can read in the country?

These and many other similar questions continue to bedevil the minds of ordinary Pakistanis.

It is instructive to note that this kind of cultural ambivalence is not limited to the illiterate or the conservative strata of Pakistani society. I recall in the early 1990s, spending a lot of time with a leftist theatre group. Although most of our discussions were built on a shared understanding of ideology and the dialectics of change, there could be strong

disagreements as well. In one of those disagreements, on a completely unrelated issue, a senior social activist informed me that I could not possibly understand 'real' popular culture because I often wore denim jeans – the implication being that these were a Western import, unlike the indigenous shalwar qameez, and therefore indicative of a Westernised mindset that clashed with a more locally rooted one.

On the face of it, that argument might seem to carry some, at least superficial, validity. But as it so happened, I was also working at the same time with a development NGO in Karachi's oldest settlement, Lyari, where the working class young men of the area would often wear denim jeans, often bought from the second-hand markets of Karachi. Aside from the aspirational element of such streetwear, there was also an element of practicality. Most of the young men wore these jeans because of their tough and compact nature, which was useful in their manual sector jobs. I am pretty certain that the young men of Lyari would have laughed at being told that they could not understand their own culture because of the trousers they wore. Here was a judgement being made that originated, like many from the opposite end of the political spectrum, in a romantic notion of popular culture and an unawareness of the lived reality of Pakistan.

It reminded me also of an incident in Peshawar, where the men in a rural development agency I worked for there, would get aghast because one of the Pakhtun women who worked there would often shake hands with her office colleagues. I recall hearing plenty of whispers about how she did not really represent real Pakhtun culture. Except. When I used to go into the field in Kohat – one of the areas we worked in – the women working the fields, in the absence of menfolk who were often away in the military or abroad as labour in the Gulf countries, had absolutely no qualms about shaking hands with visiting strangers, including men. They certainly did not believe their culture was being betrayed or threatened by a very natural act of greeting.

Yes, women reacted differently among a slightly more privileged class. In the more prosperous Charsadda region, for example, where material comforts allowed the women not to have to be out working alone in the fields, women were more likely to be cloistered separately and to take to the veil. This often left me wondering if the goal of 'uplifting' the economic status of women in poorer areas would result in their having their agency and mobility taken away from them, or at least be restricted.

Of course, none of these kind of dynamic issues are usually brought out in Pakistan's arts, which often rely on certain stereotypes to depict cultures and genders.

At the heart of the issue is, of course, the problem of defining Pakistani culture itself in an era of dynamic change, and the role of the arts within it.

The Faiz report on culture

The most significant attempt to define Pakistani culture was in 1968 through what became known as the Faiz Culture Report. It was, in fact, the report of the Standing Committee on Art and Culture, set up by the Ministry of Education under the government of General Ayub Khan and chaired by noted poet and intellectual, Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

Among its other members were the poet and one of the founders of the Pakistan Writers Guild, Jamiluddin Aali, Professor Munir Chaudhry of Dhaka University's Department of Bengali, Salahuddin Mohammad who chaired the Pakistan Features Syndicate, and writer Bano Qudsia. Rukia Kabir of the Eden Girls College in Dhaka was also part of the original committee but was later on replaced by Qamrul Hassan, Chief Designer of the East Pakistan Small Industries Corporation.

The report was presented to the government towards the end of 1968 but, before it could be taken up for consideration, political upheaval within the country meant it 'never saw the light of day, nor was it officially accepted or rejected' (Faiz

Ahmed Faiz, letter, 14 April 1975)[5]. Parts of the report were finally used as input in 1975 to draft the country's first culture policy under the government of PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

In a later interview to the historian Ahmad Salim[6], Faiz summarised the basic finding of report as this:

> Our popular culture is in actuality the very basis of our national culture.

What is ironic is that the idea of 'popular culture' defining national culture still raises hackles among many of the intelligentsia and bureaucracy trying to dictate a cultural direction for Pakistan. It is often considered beneath the exalted level Pakistani culture should be placed at. Furthermore, any of the shared culture of the Subcontinent is often denounced as an unwanted import, to be stripped away to arrive at a supposedly pure Pakistani culture that traces its roots elsewhere.

It is instructive to read some of the extracts of the report, written primarily by Faiz, not only because of its clarity but also because so little seems to have changed since its words were penned 52 years ago.

In attempting to define the idea of culture, the Report states:

> The term 'culture' was originally used for the art of making living organisms grow and develop. When applied to human beings it is popularly defined as 'the whole way of life of a specific human group or society.' This whole way of life would obviously comprise both ideological and material components, i.e. both values and social practices. The definition postulates that:
>
> a. Culture, unlike the arts, is not created by a few individuals but is 'lived' and evolved by a whole community. The arts thus are abstract or symbolic manifestations of what is lived by the community.

5 Cited in Ahmad Salim and Humaira Ishfaq, comps., *Faiz, Folk Heritage and Problems of Culture* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2013).

6 Ibid.

b. Since every culture relates to a specific human society and since every human society lives in time and space, every culture must be both historical and territorial, although its ideological components may include extra-territorial and supra-temporal elements. For instance, Muslim societies, in spite of racial, linguistic and other differences, have many cultural traits in common.

c. Since the way of life of a community is conditioned by the social organisation or system under which it lives, the culture of this community must be similarly conditioned. Any change in the cultural patterns of this community, therefore, must be accompanied by corresponding changes in its social conditions of existence. Obversely, when these social conditions change, the culture of a community must change accordingly.

d. Since culture is a way of life and not merely a way of thought, its quality and complexion are determined more by what is actually practised and not so much by what is merely professed. It is not inconceivable that a particular society may strongly believe in one set of values and actually practise, out of material considerations, values which are totally different.[7]

On the role of art in a society, the Report states:

> Art… has an important dual political role. Internally, it holds up the mirror to a nation or society and helps it to discover its own image and its own personality. The consciousness of this personality helps a nation to bring about a closer and harmonious integration among its component elements. It is thus a powerful agent for national integration.
>
> Externally it provides the most potent means to establish the identity of a nation in the international confraternity.
>
> Art, thus, is an important medium of national projection and interpretation of national thought.[8]

On the interplay between art and culture, the Report asserts:

7 Ibid., pp. 38-40.
8 Ibid., p. 41.

…[T]he arts symbolise in a finished form a society's way of life, both material and ideological. The body of arts is, therefore, the visible representation of a nation's identity or image, by which it is known and recognised. The level and quality of these arts is taken to be the measure of the level and quality of its civilisation.

Art, unlike culture, is not the raw material of social life, which exists independently of individuals, but a deliberate and superior manufacture created by a body of specialists. It predicates, on the part of the artist, an awareness of things superior to the common run and a level of sensibility higher than of those who are not similarly endowed. Art, therefore, unlike culture, is not merely a passive reflection of a way of life but an active agency, which can also, to some measure, change and modify it. It can change and modify the consciousness of all those with whom it communicates. It prescribes the good and bad in taste, the 'cultured' and 'uncultured' in personality and behaviour, the beautiful and ugly in material surroundings. It thus profoundly influences both value judgements and social behaviour within the community. Art, therefore, is an important moral (and in its perverted forms immoral) social force.

The arts provide a sublimated vehicle for the expression of urges, impulses, instincts, dreams, illusions, conflicts, happiness and unhappiness, fulfillments and frustrations of a human group. These means of self-expression are as natural and as necessary to a community as laughter or tears, or cries of pain and pleasure, to an individual. The blocking or suppression of these means can have the same pernicious psychopathic repercussions for a people as the forcible suppression of natural instincts for an individual. Artistic expression, therefore, is an important factor in people's mental health.

Art is an acknowledged source of human pleasure. So much so that this is sometimes mistaken as its sole end. This pleasurable together with other moral, intellectual and emotional components, makes good and serious art into the most instructive, beneficial and purposeful means for the utilisation of a people's leisure. Art thus is an important agent for human happiness.

All of this and more has been repeated more than once

> from more than one platform in Pakistan. Why then has so little been done? Because of misconceived, fallacious, short-sighted and even perverse national attitudes towards the problems of art and culture.[9]

The Report goes on to warn about the dangers inherent in the inherent contradictions of official state policy and how 'negative public and official attitudes towards national arts and culture have opened the gates for a resolute cultural invasion.'[10]

But it reserves special scorn for the hypocrisy of the state which has never squarely addressed the anti-culture and anti-arts school.

> It is ironic that the sections who are most vociferous against this deliberate perversion of our national cultural, ethical and ideological values, are the same who have, at least partially, and perhaps unintentionally, made this subversion possible by their unqualified hostility to the promotion of our own national arts and to the evolution of serious public standards of moral and aesthetic judgement.[11]

The Report warns that the delegation 'to individual functionaries of the State to lay down the law for the artist and cultural worker without any policy sanction except his own personal preferences and prejudices' has led to a situation where there is 'a feeling among many public officials that art and culture are rather risky things to play around with and are better left alone.'[12]

The case of film in Pakistan

Film has long been a sufferer at the hands of a confused state in Pakistan. Although Jinnah himself desired that cinema should be promoted in the new country[13], the development

9 Ibid., pp. 41-42
10 Ibid., p. 45.
11 Ibid., p. 45.
12 Ibid., p. 45.
13 Letter dated 6 January 1945 to Mohammad Masud, cited in https://tribune.com.pk/story/496489/quaid-wanted-mussalmans-to-enter-film-industry

of film in Pakistan even in the early years was beset by a lack of any state policy regarding the development of cinema and social disapproval of the people who worked in the industry. The latter largely had to do with the class background of those who ventured into a medium that many on the religious right viewed as against the teachings of Islam.[14] Because of a perception of the industry as loose-moralled and as an allegedly licentious place, women from so-called 'good families' particularly did not venture into it. This resulted in many, if not most, of the early female actors being drawn from the areas perceived to be 'red light areas'.

The combination of religious disapproval (particularly since Pakistani film drew on the traditions of Subcontinental cinema which placed a heavy focus on song and dance) and a social marginalisation of its professionals by conservatives and even the intelligentsia (which, with a few exceptions, often viewed them as shallow, uncultured and interested only in frivolous entertainment), meant that, even as Pakistani cinema scaled new heights of popularity within the country in the 1960s and early 1970s, its relationship with the state remained very ambivalent.

This ambivalence was put into stark words during the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, who had toppled an elected prime minister of Pakistan with the express vow of Islamicising the country. As personally related by broadcaster, former Pakistan Television (PTV) Managing Director and former head of the Pakistani National Council of the Arts Agha Nasir, in a meeting to address the issues of the Pakistani film industry, General Zia had questioned (in front of him and a few others present)

14 The antipathy to cinema partly stems from early Islamic injunctions against depictions of the human form in visual arts, which it was feared could lead to idol worship. Later on, literalist interpretations also found in any depiction of humans in all visual arts – including in painting, sculpture, photography, etc. – a potential source of inciting sexual passions. While most Muslims do not subscribe to such extreme views, the Taliban in Afghanistan, for example, did forbid all depictions by also banning film and television.

why he should 'be expected to do anything for fornicators.' This was while Pakistani cinema faced real challenges of technological advances from home video and television, the unbridled piracy of foreign films, a stifling censorship regime and changes in urban cinema-going culture caused partly by the state's own policies.

Understandably, nothing came out of the meeting and the stringent censorship put in place under General Zia's regime – which proscribed anything deemed socially subversive and questioning of state authority as well as 'liberal' in terms of human relations – was responsible not only in further sinking a flailing industry but also, ironically, led to the emergence of a new kind of cinema in Pakistan – one that relied on sensationalist violence, usually set within a rural/feudal world, and implied salaciousness to attract only one particular kind of cinema-goer. This was the single working class man, often living a migrant life in the city.

Many, many years later, when I was on the board of the newly established Sindh Board for Film Certification (also referred to as the Sindh Censor Board), I was part of the members of the board who decided that the 2013 film, *Waar* (Strike), considered military-backed by many, should receive an adult certification for its graphic depiction of violence and its coarse language. This certification meant that children under 18 would not be allowed to see the film. This was not taken kindly to by the film's backers, who sought to have the certification changed to a universal rating, allowing all audiences – including children – to watch the film. I was told privately by the then chair of the board that I 'should stay out of it [i.e. not contest the change] because the backers wanted to use the film as a recruiting tool and its target audience includes boys 15 or 16 years of age.'

In one of the review meetings, when I pointed out that some of the visuals showed terrorists literally blowing people's brains out and were therefore unsuitable for kids, I was told, matter-of-factly, by another member who had been corralled into supporting the change of certification, that 'this

is normal and no big deal'. He was partly right, of course – over the years, graphic violence *had* been 'normalised' in Pakistani cinema, even as questioning of dominant narratives, depictions of romantic love and nuance had been restricted or stamped out.

For their part, periodically, filmmakers would also attempt to ingratiate themselves with the state's power centres by making jingoistic, 'patriotic' films that they hoped would bolster their credentials as promoting 'the ideology of Pakistan', although this has yet to be defined.

Unfortunately, I have been a first-hand witness to the results of the devolution of arbitrary authority to individual state functionaries both as a filmmaker and during the time I helped run the KaraFilm Festival (the Karachi International Film Festival) from 2001-2014, as well as during my time serving on the Sindh Film Censor Board (2013-2016). I have also reported on media censorship as a journalist.

The stipulations against what is potentially not allowed to be depicted in film or displayed on screen under the country's film code are so vague and arbitrary, and can be interpreted so widely, that no filmmaker is ever sure about what may or may not run into problems. In fact, it is my considered opinion that, were the law to be interpreted as widely as is possible, no half-decent, non-banal film could potentially ever be made in Pakistan.

With restrictions on anything that could potentially be seen as disparaging or questioning any aspect of national security, religion, ethnic harmony and foreign policy as well as anything deemed vulgar or obscene (the definition being left unspecified and open to individual interpretation), there is little left to explore for filmmakers beyond domestic dramas and 'safe' romances or slapstick comedy. In most cases, filmmakers will self-censor any potentially troublesome content rather than run the risk of seeing their investment go down the drain or get stuck in interminable bureaucracy.

The results of a passive acceptance of this state of affairs

(despite many attempts, no government has attempted to address the vagaries of the censorship rules or managed to rehaul the policies around film in a meaningful manner) are around us. Multiple factors have contributed to the decline of cinema in the country but it would be remiss not to look at the stringent and arbitrary censorship that has driven many filmmakers away from becoming part of the film industry.

From a country listed as among the top 10 film producing countries in the world until the 1970s, Pakistan has been talking about its dying cinema industry at least for the past 25 years. At one point, in the early 1980s, Pakistan produced over 100 feature films in a year. Today, despite a small revival post-2013, it produces under 25. By 1980, Pakistan boasted over 1200 cinemas. When the KaraFilm Festival began in 2001, a film could only release on a maximum of 16 screens throughout the country. Today, despite the rise of multiplexes (a policy lobbied for by KaraFilm), it still has fewer than 125 screens.

The problem is a continued lack of consistency in policy and an inability of the state to separate actions based on objective realities from short-term ideology. The small revival of film in Pakistan in the 2010s, for example, was largely driven by the lifting in 2007 of a 45-year-old ban on the public exhibition of Indian films. This had also been lobbied for since 2002 by the KaraFilm Festival, which had argued that the short-term losses that the Pakistani film industry would suffer would be offset by the longer term gains to be made by it in terms of a pumping of much-needed finances to the cinema industry in Pakistan.

This is exactly what happened. After an initial period of loss for Pakistani cinema, the money flowing through the theatres led to the construction of more multiplexes and funding for better quality Pakistani films that audiences (crucially young people and women) actually wanted to watch. There was rekindled hope that, as the number of Pakistani films increased in number, Pakistani filmmakers would also expand beyond the usual box office-safe *masala* fare and attempt to tackle

important issues. A few instances of such kinds of films, rare as they were, did indeed indicate the process was underway. But once again, without understanding the dynamics at play, the state imposed a ban on all Indian films (for a few months in 2016-2017, and then again in 2019).

The result of this short-sighted policy has been a disastrous dip in the business of cinemas (at the time of the ban coming into force, 70 per cent of revenues were still being generated by Bollywood films) and, consequently, a stalling of the expansion of the cinema circuit and production of Pakistani content as well. Couple this with a renewed stringency regarding censorship or the inability of the state to exert its will against extremist thought and some of the most explorative cinema finds itself locked out from public exhibition.

An interesting recent example is the film *Zindagi Tamasha* (Circus of Life) which, despite receiving a clearance multiple times from the country's censor boards and even – redundantly – from a specially constituted Senate committee, finds itself blocked from release because of threats of an extremist religious outfit, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). The TLP, without having actually seen the film, has assumed that the film is an attack on religious sentiments and the clergy. The film's director and producer have denied this strenuously but, once again, the state has proved itself too weak to challenge the religious right. The situation has become absurd in that the film has already been feted at international festivals and has been nominated as Pakistan's entry for the Oscars, without ever having been officially screened in Pakistan.

Instead, state support is generously extended only to simplistic narratives. Recently, one of the biggest hits on television has been a dubbed Turkish series about the father of the first Ottoman sultan, who lived in the 13th century. It has received backing from even the Pakistan prime minister as something that reflects and teaches 'Islamic history', even though the series' Turkish writer has publicly admitted that most of the 'facts' of the story are completely made up.

In fact, there is no historical evidence even whether the

protagonist of the story, the nomadic warrior chieftain Ertugrul, in fact followed the Muslim faith or a local pagan one. This has not stopped the series *Ertugrul Ghazi* from becoming a cultural force throughout Pakistan. Multiple businesses from Peshawar down to Karachi have adopted the name and young men emulate the clothing and styling from the series with great enthusiasm on social media postings.

This is only the latest adoption of the glorified past/strongman/warrior trope that may seem harmless fantasy on the surface, but which continues to capture the imagination of Pakistanis in the absence of any alternative sources of cultural mooring. In fact, I would argue that such simplistic narratives and tropes, without any counter, help prime mass audiences for the simplistic certainties peddled by purveyors of extremism.

Simplistic narratives about strongmen saviours are not the domain of only one side of the political spectrum. In the 2013 film *Waar*, the villains were extremists and terrorists who had brought terrible violence to Pakistan. However, in a sleight of hand, the film showed them as being entirely controlled by a foreign (read Indian) agent who controlled not only their purse strings but who also plotted all their actions. The strategy was clearly to tar the extremists in the eyes of the average Pakistani as tools of a foreign power. The problem, of course, is that, unless you are able to take on the extremist mindset on its own terms, it is unlikely that the state will be able clearly to identify the real villains. Instead, it would always be chasing ghosts and offering apologia for its positions.

It would be all too easy for an intelligent extremist to use ideological arguments to undercut the state narrative. In that, the 2007 military-backed film *Khuda Ke Liye* (For God's Sake), though not as slick a production as *Waar*, had far more clarity about the issue it was setting out to tackle. That film at least attempted to grapple with the real issue of cultural confusion among ordinary Pakistanis and how it can lead to young men playing into the hands of extremists.

I saw similar confusions about the writ of the state during the time the KaraFilm Festival ran. While all sorts of pirated content, including Indian and Western mainstream cinema (and even pornography) was widely available all over Pakistan through neighbourhood video stores, illegal cable TV channels and the internet, the state's censorship was reserved for cinemas and for the festival. It was, in fact, KaraFilm's blunt refusal to submit to the censorship and the particular circumstance of a military ruler being in power who wanted to see cultural events such as the international festival take place, which resulted later in the ban on Indian films being overturned and for KaraFilm to be provided an exemption from censor rules.

One of the supreme ironies of that time was that those in power often liked to cite the example of Irani arthouse cinema as something for Pakistani cinema to aspire towards, primarily because it was not Indian or Western and originated from a conservative Muslim milieu, which Pakistanis automatically assume suits our genius better. It was often questioned why Pakistani cinema could not make the kind of excellent cinema being produced in Iran.

Neither did those raising such questions understand the particular circumstances in which Irani cinema evolved and operated (often state-supported), nor did they realise that many of the Irani films receiving adulation worldwide were actually subtle critiques of the state itself. Similar films, if they could even find the funding to be made in Pakistan, would likely run into problems with the same state functionaries heaping praise on Irani films.

The few foreign-funded Pakistani films that have received critical acclaim abroad are often dubbed as conspiracies against Pakistan's image (many Irani arthouse films also receive investment from foreign sources). All too often, those in positions of power to effect change have baulked at changing the paradigm, which is why the 'enlightenment' of the 2000s was short-lived and disappeared along with individuals.

> It must be clearly understood, however, that freedom of expression is of the very essence of [the] creative process and whatever the organisation and apparatus set up for the promotion of art and culture, it must not be allowed to deteriorate into an instrument of thoughtless regimentation or bureaucratic control.[15]

More that 50 years ago, Faiz Ahmed Faiz had pointed out in his culture report that:

> Cultural activity in a developing nation is in many ways a form of socio-political activity and it is only through this activity that a people's full participation in nation-building can be ensured.… If the State or responsible public agencies do not meet the demands of popular leisure and emotive satisfactions, these demands are bound to be supplied by other irresponsible agencies with no public or moral scruples. The goods they supply can prove even more deleterious for the mental and moral health of a nation than drugs and opiates.[16]

Islam, atom bomb and bedsheets

A few years ago, close to 23 March, I was listening to one of the FM radio channels while driving. Listening to host-audience talk on these channels can often be a test of one's patience because of the utter banality of most discussions but, perversely, they often provide vicarious insight into the obsessions of the average urban middle-class audience. On that particular instance, keeping in mind the upcoming Pakistan Resolution Day and no doubt hoping to boost patriotic feelings, the host had asked listeners to call in to tell him what, as Pakistanis, we should be proud of about our country. What followed was something bordering on the surreal.

The first caller announced that as Pakistanis, the first thing

15 Faiz Culture Report, reproduced in Salim and Ishfaq, *Faiz, Folk Heritage and Problems of Culture*, p. 58.

16 Ibid., p. 48.

we should be proud of is being Muslim. 'Okay, absolutely', replied the host (in Urdu), 'we should be proud of our religion Islam. What else?' 'Errrr…', replied the caller, 'Islam and….' He couldn't think of anything else. After attempting to coax a second thought from him, the host finally thanked the man and cut to a second caller.

The second caller, a woman this time, led in with 'As Muslims we should take pride in Islam!' Once again the host agreed with her and asked her for something else to feel proud about. 'We have the best religion in the world, so we should hold our head up high about it,' she responded. Yes, the host, agreed, but anything else? 'Errrr…', the woman took a few seconds to think, but couldn't come up with anything.

Cut to the third. The third caller chipped in with 'Atom bomb!' much to the host's relief. 'Okay!', the host replied, 'yes, we are a nuclear power so that is something to be proud about! Anything else?' 'Errrr… Islam?' The third caller couldn't think of anything more so the host finally moved on to the next caller.

From that point on, every single caller – and there must have been at least a dozen of them in the space of about 15 minutes – recited the same two elements: Islam and the atomic bomb. They tried dressing it up in different words ('*Deen*', '*Mazhab*', '*Imaan*', 'Islam', '*Mussalmaan Hona*' on the one hand, 'Atom Bomb', 'Nuclear Power', '*Johari Hathiyaar*' on the other) but the list could not go beyond the two items. Most could not think beyond the one and inevitably when the host would ask if there were other things they could think of, the answers ended in an 'Errrrr…' and a switch to the next caller. It became something of a comedy routine.

Then another woman called in. She began with listing Islam. By this time the host too had become a bit short-tempered so he acknowledged it brusquely – 'Yes, Islam, anything else?' She listed Pakistan being a nuclear power. 'Yes, yes, the atom bomb, anything else.' 'Errrrr…' the caller had got stuck as those before her. The host could not contain his impatience.

'All I've heard today is Islam and atom bomb, atom bomb and Islam, is there really nothing else that Pakistanis can be proud of!', he asked her exasperated. It was a fillip to her. 'Bed sheets!!!' she blurted out.

There was a moment of silence on air as the host took in the fact that he had finally managed to extract a third item, even though the bathos was palpable. He recovered his composure and attempted to cover up the surreality of the moment by saying, 'Great! Indeed, textiles are one of our largest exports! We should be proud of the quality of our textiles, bedsheets, towels, clothing….'

I stopped listening soon after – the recycling of the three items resumed – but I couldn't help thinking about this exchange. Forget our collective obsession and resentment about how narrowly the world perceives Pakistan, this holy triumvirate – 'Islam, Atomic Bomb and Bedsheets' – perfectly defined the popular imagination about Pakistan *within* Pakistan. It was a sad comment on Pakistanis but perhaps an apt one.

When even our imagination about ourselves, about what is a source of pride for us, is so narrowly circumscribed, is it any wonder then that we are seduced by narratives that offer fantasy? When our cultural moorings are so beset with confusion and ambivalence, is it any surprise that we are drawn towards those narratives that offer certainty, even if in highly simplistic terms? Instead of being confident about and celebrating the multiplicities of our identities, is it so unbelievable that we often try and suppress diversity and questioning?

This societal paucity of imagination is a direct result of the marginalisation we have allowed of cultural mediums such as film, music, literature, theatre and dance – mediums that, more than anything else, are important to how we perceive and fashion our own selves and which are needed to resolve the identity issues we struggle with. More than anything else, these mediums are important for the conversations we need to have amongst ourselves.

These internal conversations are important particularly because when outsiders – such as those in the West – attempt to provide input or posit a framework of thinking about dynamically changing and diverse Muslim societies, they inevitably end up dealing in binaries. The issue in our culturally diverse societies is not simply 'liberal' vs 'conservative', 'religious' vs 'secular', or 'Sufi' vs 'Salafi' to name just a few of the binaries thrown around. These are imposed binaries that do not reflect the complexity of the lived reality of Pakistan.

In fact, one of the greatest disservices in recent times to the inclusive notions of indigenous Sufi thought in Pakistan has been the perception of its co-option in the service of a Western-backed anti-extremist agenda, which has made many people look upon it with a degree of cynicism and distrust. The Pakistani state (and its well-wishers) would have been far better off allowing an organic discourse to proceed. But for that to happen, it would have to acknowledge that freedom of thought and expression are the foremost requisites, and that it needs to facilitate them by acting decisively in its favour and acting decisively against those seeking to threaten these liberties.

Nobody can guarantee that the process of this discourse will always be smooth sailing or that it would be short and sweet. As I have argued, the confusion has a long history and like any process, resolving it must proceed at its own pace. But it is important to facilitate it by giving cultural mediums the space and the liberty to address it.

Any other solution, born out of a lack of clarity within the state itself and imposed from the top is likely to be met with failure. But perhaps more importantly, *not* allowing the crisis of cultural identity to be addressed through an organic manner will only create further space for intolerant narratives to assert themselves.

Construction of 'Familiar Others' on Celluloid Representation of religious minorities in popular Pakistani cinema

Salman Asif

Preamble

Cinematic stereotypes reflect and shape prevalent misconceptions and prejudices. Perceptions promoted by cinema can and often lead to an intergenerational process of 'othering' of disempowered and dispossessed groups, especially those whose exclusion intersects with their status as demographic minority.

Pakistan's cinematic history provides an ad-mix of a) limited examples of neutral cinematic representation of characters from religions other than Islam; and b) a rather pervasive reduction of their lived realities into repetitive,

insidious caricatures projected on the screen for the past seven decades. Persons from religious minorities have been recurring targets of such reductionism. Either represented as mysterious, menacing villains or as comically pompous caricatures – persons with cultural-religious diversity were, at best 'benevolently' represented as 'model minority' with tragic and irredeemable cultural crises.

Religious minority representation in Pakistan cinema broadly manifests itself in three overarching streams. Firstly, in movies made mostly in the fifties with all Hindu characters (such as *Qatil* directed by Anwar Kamal Pasha in 1956, starring Sabiha Khanum, Santosh Kumar, Mussarrat Nazir and Aslam Pervaiz) with a view to compete against Bombay made Hindi movies that were widely released in Pakistan at the time (and with an intention for these Pakistani movies to be released in India and be commercially successful). An intriguing exception to these earlier movies was Pakistan's own version of *Devdas* released in 1965 directed by Khawaja Sarfaraz, based on the Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay famous Bengali novel *Devdas* from 1917, with actors Habib, Nayyar Sultana and Shamim Ara in the lead.

Secondly, there is the spectrum of movies with plots and characters where religious diversity emerges to enact costume – historical dramas depicting negative colonial British and Jewish characters, such as Khalil Qaisar's *Shaheed* (written by Riaz Shahid) released in 1962. Woven as a romance and intrigue drama the movie presents a fictionalised account of Zionist expansion and exploitation of Palestine's natural resources in the 1920s. The key Jewish figure in the movie is the scheming Zionist miner Lawrence bin David played by actor Talish. There is an unmistakable allusion to TE Lawrence, British archaeologist, army-officer, diplomat, and writer who became renowned for his role in the Arab Revolt and the Sinai and Palestine Campaign (1915–1918) against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. This movie was followed by another one of Khalil Qaisar's productions (written by Riaz Shahid) *Firangi* released in 1964. The drama is set in pre-partition India ruled over by the British through

deceit and repression. Actor Talish, at this instance, plays the central role of a conspiratorial English army officer who deploys connivance and terror for construction of a road through the north west frontier of the British empire – a colonial project being opposed by the local community.

In 1969 writer Riaz Shahid directed and released his own venture *Zarqa* forming a trilogy of his successful anti-colonial historical dramas. The movie is set against the backdrop of an imagined 1948 Palestinian uprising against Israel's occupation of Jerusalem. Once again, actor Talish cast as heartless Major David of the Israeli army appears as the brutal embodiment of Israel's conceived oppression.

Thirdly, multi-religious characters appear in a number of Pakistani movies, mostly as card board supporting roles serving as cogs in the larger wheel of life. There are some exceptions here too. For example, the 1976 movie *Society Girl,* directed by actor Sangeeta, pivots around the life and travails of an urban Christian girl Julie (played by director-actor Sangeeta) who works as a steno in an office during the day and as an elite sex worker at night. While an unfortunate turn of events contributed to her becoming a 'society girl' (a euphemism to 'call girl'), she nonetheless has preserved her moral core and sense of fair-play. Yet, the tragic dichotomy of her lifestyle is made to seem possible due to the Christian community's perceived susceptibility to be more permissive and its propensity for being, less censorious towards a young woman's life's choices that involve sex work and substance addiction. And ultimately, she finds redemption through the humane heart of Asif – a Muslim man (played by Ghulam Mohiyuddin) who restores her dignity by loving her unconditionally and by her eventual death.

The conflict in the 'society girl's' life is a cyclically strewn pattern regurgitated in many more movies. For example, representation of a God-fearing Christian woman who is simultaneously a Madam of a brothel (Sabiha Khanum in *Ik Gunah Aur Sahi*, 1975), a gambling drunkard Christian elderly man who in his private life is a doting father struggling to hold

on to a certain moral compass against his family's wanton greed (Nanha in *Sheeshe ka Ghar*, 1978), a Hindu girl separated from her biological family during the partition and repatriated to be perniciously betrayed by and helplessly ensnared by those with her own religious identity (Shamim Ara in *Lakhon mein Aik*, 1967), a boorish and bullying Sikh youth who must redeem his higher self by doing a good deed to a Pakistani Muslim culminating in his untimely and unnecessary death (Allauddin in *Kartar Singh*, 1947).

While religious minority characters have traditionally been portrayed as depraved or foreign characters; Christian characters are invariably portrayed as Anglo-Indian relics of the Raj whose Pakistani identity is matter of suspicion. In post-1965 Urdu cinema, Hindu characters are the scheming villains with an inherent and irredeemable vendetta against the existence of Pakistan. A certain essentialist and majoritarian view of Pakistani identity underlines these representations.

While there is hardly any evidence of either successive governments or any national authorities overtly advising film makers to negatively represent religious minorities, yet soon after the 1965 Indo-Pak war, Pakistani cinema seems to have suddenly and unmistakably adopted a cinematically crude, socially toxic and politically xenophobic presentation of the Hindu community. The overall air of religious nationalism with notions of pan-Pakistani identity that hung heavy upon cinema post-1965 war, gained significant currency during and after General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorship (1978–1988), defined by his attempts to engineer quasi-Islamisation of the society, governance and law of the country.

While the post 65-war Pakistani cinema is unprecedentedly pugnacious in portraying religious minority characters as depraved or as foreign 'agents'; Christian characters invariably appear as Anglo-Indian relics of the Raj whose presence in or Pakistani identity remains a matter of suspicion. Hindu characters in these Urdu movies are hardly ever more than scheming villains with an inherent and irredeemable vendetta against the existence of Pakistan. A certain essentialist and

majoritarian view of Pakistani identity underlines these representations.

In that context, this essay attempts to examine the construction and representation of minority identities in the visual culture of Pakistan, and its consequent emergence of a cinematic historiography of 'othering' of those following religions other than Islam. This essay endeavours to understand the underlying causes of linearity and simultaneity which are fortes of the moving image, with regards to visual formation and representation of religious, ethno-linguistic and cultural identities.

A major objective of this essay is to explore a framework for studying how partition of India in 1947 reified, hitherto fluid, predominantly non-violent and widely tolerant spectrum of admittedly incongruent cultural and religious standpoints. This essay will attempt to explore how this reification was later nurtured and amplified by cinema to evolve as a quasi-ideological premise that at once trivialises the majority religion through its reductionist eulogising and as a reference point for fuelling faith-based social hierarchies; while on the other hand endeavours to frenzy a sense of being ideologically besieged by real and imaginary antagonising forces loathe to Pakistan's Islamic social veneer. This also means that complexity of identities beyond the 'national' is regularly ignored, often at the cost of fetishizing what is loosely referred to as 'the national'.

This essay aims to further explore the interplay of intervening spaces between cinema and politics reflecting on effects of religious nationalism on cinema. This essay therefore, focuses on religious and ethnic minorities cinematically scapegoated to contrast a fantastical, lionised Islamic society. The essay will also attempt to investigate if this trend of diminishing religious minorities characters in cinema as facile placards, has ultimately led to a virtual erasure of any form of religious diversity in contemporary Pakistani cinema. This essay argues that cinematic representations of religious diversity, intersect with reflections on postcolonial standpoints that

may contribute to representations of religious minorities and notions of nationality in cinema.

Ultimately, this essay argues that the period marked by forging of a new exclusivist national identity in post-independence Pakistan is a far shorter period than that of a shared multi-religious and multi-cultural identities rooted in centuries-old mutuality based on shared history.

The parameters of this essay are set up to cover largely Urdu cinematic productions from 1947–2018. A limitation of this essay remains an overall lack of access to, and consequent lack of examination of pre-1971 Bangla movies produced in the former East Pakistan. Equally, there is a room for inclusion of a whole body of movies that portray tribal or indigenous characters with non descript (but certainly non-Islamic) beliefs. The other factor that has affected the selection of film resources for this essay is general lack of institutional archiving of Pakistani cinema. Regrettably, whatever, cinema material has survived and is available, is predominantly if not entirely due to private and random archiving. This essay is cognisant of its use of the rather problematic, yet umbrella term, 'Pakistani cinema' while largely examining Urdu cinema and just a couple of Punjabi movies and not being able to extend its remit to include Bangla and Pashto cinema. In Pakistan's context, the exclusion of diversity from cinematic representation can also be a symptom of the often, argued notion of Pakistan as a single community, which is reinforced with every use of the term 'Pakistani cinema'. The use of expression 'religious minority' or 'minorities' made with trepidation that it carries the unwelcome potential of minoritizing the already marginalised. This essay has tried to avoid use of expression 'actress' and felt it appropriate to use 'actor' for both female and male actors.

The cognisance, context and stories of actors, play-back singers and other cinema professionals from diverse religious backgrounds who richly contributed to Pakistani cinema demand a dedicated, specific essay to highlight and acknowledge their appropriate due role and resilience in a

largely determinist, if not hostile work environment. This essay, however, in its gamut aims to focus on cinematic representation with a considered endeavour to construct a foundation that may buttress adding this dimension in a separate essay.

The space that shrunk and further shrunk

Pakistani cinema's trajectory from its pre-partition vibrant reflection of religious plurality to post independence recycling of a handful of clichй‍s, with seldom ever storylines of their own ran parallel to another ironic political orchestra being played out in its early years, across its corridors of power, cleansing it of diversity in decision-making. The two fed upon and drew from each other. Let's have a quick look.

It must have been a gloomy dawn in the late 1950 summer for Jogendranath Mandal (29 January 1904–5 October 1968), as he packed up to leave for good the country, in whose foundation and fruition pulsed his relentless efforts, dreams and hopes. Worst still, he was heartbreakingly heading off to make home, live and die in India – the land he had earlier resolutely abandoned in favour of the newly formed Pakistan. With this fateful flight, his exemplary political rise plummeted and an erstwhile feverish political career, came to an abrupt end at the age of 47.

Trusted and hand-picked by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, Mandal a celebrated Hindu Muslim League party worker and a legislator, hailed from the lowest tier of Hindu religious/caste system hierarchy. His political high-noon witnessed his presiding over the historic session of the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947, where Mohammad Ali Jinnah was sworn in as the first Governor-General of Pakistan. At this occasion, Jinnah gave his land-mark speech outlining his vision for an inclusive and impartial government, religious freedom, rule of law and equality for all. Jinnah had thundered his conviction to a roaring applause:

> I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.… I shall always be guided by the principles of justice and fair play without any, as is put in the political language, prejudice or ill-will, in other words, partiality or favouritism.

Yet, in the newly formed country, the Hindu community had now become a minority, not just in numbers but in voice and political visibility too. The inimitable Jinnah dealt with this shift by appointing Mandal, a Hindu member of the Assembly, to preside over the session, to subvert any scepticism about his progressive and inclusive vision of the country that was fated to augur it otherwise.

Mandal, later serving as country's first minister of law and labour, and also as the second minister of Commonwealth and Kashmir affairs, had even supported the Objectives Resolution in March 1949 promulgated after Jinnah's death. Presented in the Constituent Assembly by Liaquat Ali Khan on 7 March 1949 and passed on 12 March, the resolution continues to be critiqued by progressives as the first institutional instrument ultimately morphing Jinnah's 'secular Pakistan' into a 'religious state'. While the resolution made commitments to the rights of religious minorities, it enshrined all freedoms subject to their alignment to interpretation of the dominant religion.

In his support of this instrument, Mandal even risked facing rebuke of other Hindu members of the legislative assembly including vociferous Prem Hari, Sris Chandra Chattopadhyaya and Kumar Datta for his support for the resolution. Whereas, his other Hindu peers had vehemently opposed the resolution asserting that national sovereignty should belong to the people of Pakistan instead of a matter of faith as the resolution demanded. The solitary Muslim opposition to the resolution came from Mian Muhammad Iftikharuddin, a member of the Assembly.

With the passing of the resolution, a certain dye was cast for the future status of religious minorities' social and political existence in Pakistan. In less than a year, Mandal was relinquished of his state duties and marginalised. He was disillusioned. The space for religious diversity on equal grounds had irredeemably shrunk within the state apparatus. He left.

Perhaps the second most significant legislative cloud casting a long and drearier shadow over Pakistan's religious minorities' equitable inclusion and agency sprung from the introduction of the 'blasphemy laws' between 1980 and 1986 during the dictatorship of President Zia-ul-Haq. Its disproportionate brunt faced by Pakistan's beleaguered Christian community is well documented.

The spate of everyday experiences of ostracism, stigma, being subjected to hate-speech, violence, discrimination and exclusion, abductions and forced conversions, accusations of blasphemy, targeted killings, and sporadic vandalism on places of worship, suggest that little or no normal life is possible for religious minorities in Pakistan. It is a hazardous space for religious minorities.

While religious minorities in Pakistan have demonstrated unusual resilience in ensuring that their lives are not entirely afloat in a timeless stasis of collective oblivion, or untouched by wider historical, social and political happenings – the question remains, how much do we know about them? And indeed, how do the visual media in Pakistan know about them?

Pakistani cinema's understanding of Hindu community and its hasty synonymization of the community with being 'Indian citizens'; its invariable perception of the Christian community as 'Anglo-Indian' comes at the cost of a certain erasure – an erasure of a shared past, or alternative possibilities of shared spaces. They are cinematically represented as the suspect within; inconvenient reminders of communalism or that of imperial aftermath, even when cast without explicit malice.

Looking Through the Back-view Mirror

On Tuesday, 12 December 1911, a North Delhi landmark was just as flamboyantly assembled as it was fastidiously bedecked and festooned to reflect the unparalleled colonial might and razzmatazz of the British Raj. Etched in British India's otherwise dismal and deceitful past, the 1911 Delhi Durbar at the Coronation Park, as the grandest display of its rule, marked the proclamation of George V and Mary of Teck as Emperor and Empress of India. This would also be the last British royal coronation to be held in India.

The successor, Edward VIII abdicated in December 1936 before his coronation, whereas, the Indian National Congress vehemently passed a forceful motion weeks after George VI's accession calling for a boycott of any such royal visit or commemoration in India. The onset of World War II and India's independence movement gaining full-steamed momentum across the sub-continent, finally sealed any prospects of any such extravaganza in future.

The 1911 coronation however, in its wake did decisively catalyse the era of motion-films making in India that was to scale unprecedented cinematic thresholds in the next decades and ultimately evolve into the world's largest film industry. And this happened through the filming of a feature film of the event titled 'With Our King and Queen Through India' (1912) – also known as 'The Durbar in Delhi' – in the early colour process Kinemacolor and released on 2 February 1912. This was to be one of the earliest films made in India and widely showcased at key theatres in its metropolises, principally for its urban elite.

Identity and Representation in early Indian Cinema

'While *The Life of Christ* was rolling fast before my physical eyes, I was mentally visualising the Gods, Shri Krishna, Shri Ramachandra, their Gokul and their Ayodhya. I was gripped by a strange spell. I bought another ticket and saw the film

again. This time I felt my imagination taking shape on the screen. Could this really happen? Could we, the sons of India, ever be able to see the Indian images on the screen?'
– Phalke on watching Jesus on the screen[1]

Identity and its representation as contested streams in films are witnessed right from the very onset of earlier cinema in India. For example, one of the earliest Indian film-makers Dadasaheb Phalke, inspired by watching The Life of Christ (1906) at a theatre in Bombay, made a full-length silent motion-film Satyawadi Raja Harishchandra which premiered at the Olympia Theatre, Bombay on the 21 April 1913. The motion-film, anchored in historical fiction drama invoked an unambiguous sense of identity and an explicit yearning to reclaim pre-colonial history from colonial erasure, to construct a matrix of primordial human sentiments and values that pivot on a moral compass that draws from India's own literary and socio-cultural heritage.

Contemporary film historians of Indian cinema maintain[2] that the Phalke's silent motion-picture struck a pervasive impression appealing to a varied spectrum of audiences in various parts of India. Its rather enthusiastic reception marked the foundation of the commercial motion-pictures' industry in India.

As the film industry in the pre-divided Indian sub-continent flourished, major film production hubs centred in Bombay (now Mumbai and currently the heart of 'Bollywood' and Hindi cinema), Calcutta (now Kolkata for Hindi and Bangla movies), the capital of India's West Bengal state, Madras (now Chennai, for Tamil, Telugu and Kannada movies before 1947) on the Bay of Bengal in eastern India, and the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu – and Lahore (provincial capital of Pakistan's province of Punjab for Hindi-Urdu-Punjabi cinema).

1 B. V. Dharap, *Indian Films* (Pune: National Film Archive of India, 1985), p. 35.

2 Gulzar, Govind Nihalani, and Saibal Chatterjee, *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2003).

And it is Lahore's film industry that principally informs this essay. But let's briefly dwell a little on some key threshold moments from this city's British Raj history. The Declaration of the Independence of India was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian National Congress and founder of modern India and passed unanimously at midnight on 31 December 1929 at Lahore's Bradlaugh Hall. The Indian Swaraj flag was adopted at this time as well.

Lahore's central jail became the incarceration centre for India's iconic independence activists such as Jatindra Nath Das[3], and was also where activist, revolutionary and writer Bhagat Singh (27 September 1907–23 March 1931) was hanged in 1931.

In 1940, the All India Muslim League under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah (regarded as the founder of Pakistan) along with other key leaders passed the Lahore Resolution in demanding the creation of Pakistan as a separate homeland for the Muslims of India.

This stream of Lahore's pre-independence history, along with its pre- and post-1947 demographic makeup and the aftermath of the partition of India were to shape the contours of its film industry from 1947 onwards – a film industry, which would ultimately come to be known as the Pakistan film industry after 1971.

According to the 1941 census, city of Lahore had a population of 671,659, of which 64.5 per cent were Muslims, with the remainder being Hindu and Sikh, alongside a small Christian community.[4] The demographic findings soon became a political battleground, being vociferously disputed by Hindus and Sikhs before the Boundary Commission that would draw the Radcliffe Line to demarcate the border of the two new states based on religious demography. It was argued that the

3 https://thewire.in/history/freedom-fighter-jatindra-nath-das-political-prisoners

4 Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2004).

city had just about 54 per cent Muslim population, and that Hindu and Sikh populations of the city and their predominant share in the economy and educational institutions ought to trump Muslim demography. Two-thirds of shops, and 80 per cent of Lahore's industrial set ups were claimed to be owned by the Hindu and Sikh community[5].

The ambivalence and ambiguity that ominously hung large upon the future of multi-religious and multi-ethnic Lahore until late in the day, worryingly close to the actual partition of India fuelled socio-political-religious schisms that were to surface in most vicious forms of violence, inflicted by people upon people.

The city that was as late as the 1940s acclaimed for its rich history and heritage as a primordial seat of learning with its largely peaceful multi-religious milieu, economic buoyancy, and once the proud capital of the leader of the Sikh Empire, Ranjeet Singh (1780 –1839), that ruled the northwest Indian subcontinent in the early half of the 19th century, tremored with unprecedented political shifts.

The assiduously broadened socio-religious and political ruptures that had polarised the city in the past decade before 1947, resulted in partition's goriest inter-religious, political riots resulting in a blood bath and devastation that pointed to each one of the religious groups and political outfits, both as victims and victimisers. Early riots in March and April 1947, vandalised no less than 6,000 of Lahore's 82,000 homes. With Lahore ultimately awarded to Pakistan, the city witnessed not just carnage but ethnic cleansing at a scale that displaced 66 per cent of its Hindu and Sikh populations by late August 1947.[6] And the rest of them would be uprooted too in the succeeding months.

The only established film industry that Pakistan inherited after its independence was indeed the Lahore film industry. Later, Karachi, Dhaka and Peshawar were to establish their

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.

own film production hubs.

Early in 1921, Abdur Rashid Kardar, a young artist, writer and film enthusiast from Lahore joined hands with his literary friends, GK Mehta and Shankardev Arya, to make the first silent motion-picture in Lahore titled as *The Daughters of Today*. Released in 1924, in Lahore that just had nine operational cinema houses, the movie competed against movies made in far more evolved filmmaking centres of Bombay, Calcutta and indeed movies made in Britain and the United States. Kardar played the lead role in the movie. Regrettably, there is not much information available beyond this that can inform this essay about the content of the movie.

In 1928, Kardar set up his United Players Corporation film production set-up, which in fact laid the first foundation stone for the film industry in Lahore. This followed rolling out a number of movies including *Husn Ka Daku* (Mysterious Eagle), that won mild commercial success but clearly put Lahore on the map of India's film making cities. Four years later in 1932, Kardar directed and released Lahore's first Punjabi feature film with sound, based on the classical Punjabi romantic tale, *Heer Ranjha* in collaboration with Hakim Ram Prashad's newly established banner Play Art Photo Tone.

And from 1935, there was no looking back. Dr Daulat Ram with his three movies (*Sacred Ganges, Suhaag Din,* and *Suraagh ki Sirhee* – the latter two directed by Urdu playwright Imtiaz Ali Taj); and Dalsukh Pancholi and Roshan Lal Shorey who set up Shorey Studios turned out *Radha Shyam*, and *Majnu* in 1935, *Dulla Bhatti* in 1940 and a mega commercial success *Mangti* in 1943 made entirely with Lahore based cast including Mumtaz Shanti and Manorama. Shorey migrated to Bombay in 1947 after locking up his studios. Shorey Studio was mobbed, vandalised and burnt to ashes. Dalsukh Pancholi, born in Karachi, on the other hand had set up his own film production company and studio, Pancholi Art Pictures in

Lahore. After rolling out block-busters such as *Gul Bakavli* in 1938 and *Khandan* featuring Noor Jehan, the singing heroine and directed by Shaukat Hussain Rizvi – who too fled to Bombay in 1947 as the riots raged. His studio that had remained miraculously untouched during the mob attacks was later declared as the evacuee property by the newly formed Pakistan government.

This brought a nearly-over three decades of Lahore's composite, multi-religious cinema industry to an abrupt end. The new Pakistani cinema with a set of new ethos was to rise from the ashes, the anguish and pain of partition amidst its all-pervasive debris of displacement, deception and despair. And most of all, it had to salvage itself from its own demons, while searching for a new 'national' identity that set itself apart from the one lost to violence and division. The question that constantly loomed upon and nagged the post-partition film makers was: what would be the contours and content of the new ideological fulcrum of cinema in a country made in the name of ideology? How would the new cinema be any different in its drawing and constructing of a new cinematic identity that aligns with new political realities; from its own pluralist heritage as it had largely done in the past three decades through films made by Hindus and Muslims heavily referenced in a trans-religious, shared literary memory, spanning from Radha Shyam to Heer Ranjha? What new positions would be taken? Who would be new cinema heroes and what would be the face of villainy? If India had to be divided along religious lines and on the basis of a fundamental ideology that Muslims of united India were irreconcilably a different 'nation' than the Hindus and Sikhs of the land, then how different would be the Hindi-Urdu cinema produced in Pakistan from the Hindi-Urdu cinema being rather uninterruptedly produced in India? Will it be Muslim cinema versus Hindu cinema? What would differentiate the two, especially when Hindu film makers were producing movies on topics from Muslim history and Muslim actors were appearing as Hindu deities in Hindu mythological

costume dramas? What would be the future of Muslim actors with adopted Hindu names – Dilip Kumar, Madhu Bala, Shyama, Nimmi, Ranjit, Santosh Kumar, Darpan – both in India and Pakistan? How would the two countries represent their newly formed minorities?

Pakistan Film Industry from 1947 to 1964: Construction of New Identities

The question of new cinematic identity, in first two decades of Pakistani cinema ensued an emphasis on a perceived shift, or fracturing, that melted into new identities that evolved in relation to a sceptical look at the past and its composite culture. This, for many of the early film makers meant drawing from the political scramble in which the Pakistani cinema found itself. This was not just a matter of constructing new identities, transformed by new cultural and demographic systems, but a matter of representing these identities and affecting identities of its spectators. The point was that new identities, once identified had to be represented, even though they were fragmented, comprising multiple layers and parts that had historically been gelled into one another.

The signs of eventual state suspicion and governance of cinema and film makers became evident rather as early on as 1954 as it banned acclaimed progressive pre-partition film director WZ Ahmad's first Pakistani film *Roohi* and later his second movie *Waada* (The Promise) ultimately allowed to be released in 1957 to a great box office success.

This marked the first instances of Pakistani Censor Board raising barricades against meaningful cinema, banned by the Board on charges of WZ Ahmed amplifying socialist ideas through their critique of the 'ashrafia', the affluent elite. A certain red line was drawn with these state interventions for other film makers to stay away from stepping upon the forbidden line and never daring to harshly look at opportunism and impunity that ran rampant in the newly formed country. Even worst, this also led to an era of self-censorship divorcing

cinema from socio-political commentary.

Understandably, Pakistani movies in the early fifties envisaged release and business in India, given the two neighbours had still not fully cemented their mutual hostility. This also meant telling stories with Hindu characters that viewers in India could identify with. This was purely an economic decision, that didn't either help Pakistani cinema to profit in India or successfully compete against Indian cinema. Yet, it turned out to be a strategy that worked roaringly well for Pakistani audience predominantly preferring Indian movies that were still routinely released in Pakistani theatres. For example, Director Sabtain Fazli's 1952 box office success *Dupatta* (The Head Scarf) written by renowned writer and poet Hakim Ahmed Shuja offers a complex tale of romance, loss and redemption with Nur Jehan, Sudhir and Ajay Kumar in the lead – with cleverly chosen religiously neutral names (Nur Jehan is Bulbul and Ajay Kumar is Roshan). No characters are identified with Muslims names at any point in the movie. While Nur Jehan continuously adorns a 'tilak' on the forehand identifying as a Hindu woman, her conversation like that of other characters remains in chaste Urdu. Writer Hakim Shuja successfully evaded the question of his characters' religious identity while offering a gripping plot.

Another, classic 1955 example in this vein is that of Director Anwar Kamal Pasha's film *Qatil,* also written by Hakim Ahmed Shuja. This commercially successful romantic-social drama presented all Hindu characters and won resounding accolades.

Surprisingly, most early Pakistani movies across the first decade of independence were made on plots that seem wilfully oblivious to partition and its horrors. Perhaps, in the wake of partition, the trauma of displacement exacerbated economic uncertainty and dismal lack of cinematic wherewithal marred film-makers' potential to risk taking and experimenting on either side of the divide.

However, two key Pakistani movies from the early decades made a daring departure and glance at Partition. Punjabi film

Kartar Singh (1959) and the 1967 Urdu movie *Lakhon mein Aik* (One in the Hundred Thousand) take heads on reflecting on the human cost of the divide, albeit with clear construction of good and evil binaries around religious identities.

The anti-hero of renowned film writer and poet Saif ud Din Saif's movie *Kartar Singh* is a boorish and salivating misogynist Sikh youth, Kartar Singh (played by actor Allaudin), who represents the tragic antithesis of erstwhile inter-religious coexistence. Unlike the older pre-partition Hindu and Sikh generations maintaining their bonhomie and compassion towards their Muslim neighbours despite communal violence around them – he is a heartless radicalised anti-Muslim youth.

While older Hindu character Vaid Prem Nath and Sikh Jarnail Singh relentlessly display respect for humanity and commitment to maintaining a high moral ground; Kartar Singh is swept into scorching hate by mobbing of his home and exacts his revenge by attacking the film's hero Umer Din's (played by actor Sudheer) home. The partition takes place with inevitable displacement and tearing apart of local populations. Umer Din makes it across the border and joins the border security force manning the border, but to his utter anguish his younger sister and brother are left behind. His sister is rescued by Jarnail Singh and safely escorted to Pakistan. Kartar Singh prompted by the good hearted Vaid Prem Nath, agrees to escort Umer Din's younger brother to the border. Umer Din catches a distant glimpse of a suspicious man riding on the horseback about to violate the border line between the two countries and fires at him. The rider falls off the horse, the camera shows that there is another younger person on the horse-back, who is unhurt. As Umer Din approaches closer to the fallen and fatally shot rider, he realises that he is none other than Kartar Singh, safely bringing back his younger brother. In his final moments, Kartar Singh asks Umer Din to write to Vaid Prem Nath to testify that he had fulfilled his promise to him of safely repatriating the young boy to his family.

Over the years, this movie has acquired an iconic stature

in its sensitively treating a divisive and charged subject. However, despite, its ability to not tar the entire Hindu and Sikh – Indian – community with a sweep, the film still creates an uncomfortable binary of presenting Muslim characters as inherently good natured and wilfully pandering to the dangerously misleading stereotype in portraying Kartar Singh as a loutish Sikh youth who must redeem his higher self by doing a good deed to a Pakistani Muslim, culminating in his untimely and unnecessary death.

Director, film writer and lyricist Zia Sarhadi, was a late migrant to Pakistan from Bombay where he had earned critical acclaim of making socialist realist cinema in the fifties through his two tour de force movies *Hum Log* (1951) and *Footpath* (1953).

In Pakistan he wrote, *Lakhon Mein Aik* (1967) regarded as post-independence Indo-Pak's first cross-border love story that tells the life of a young Hindu girl and her father given protection by his Muslim friend Ahmed (played by actor Talish) amidst violent chaos engulfing idyllic Kashmiri village 'Prem Nagar'. The young girl's father Hardayal, decides to make it to the Indian controlled side on his own to arrange accommodation and later return to Prem Nagar to pick his daughter up. He never returns.

The girl, Shakuntala grows up as a Hindu (played by actor Shamim Ara) in the benevolent Muslim household, that suffers its own scars of the partition. Ahmed's own wife has been killed in the violence and his son Dildar (played by actor Ijaz), the same age as Shakuntala, has been separated and has lost his memory after getting a head injury during mob violence. Shakuntala and Ijaz grow up in the same village, oblivious of each other's origin, and fall in love with each other. Dildar, adopted by a good-natured foster parent, has no recollection of his real father. Shakuntala and Dildar's affair is disapproved by their foster parents. Dildar is sent away from the village. 20 years later, Hardayal unexpectedly shows up at Ahmed's door and narrates that he had suffered such mental distress after leaving

his daughter behind that he had to be institutionalised for nearly two decades, at the end of which he recovered from his condition and made his way back to reclaim his daughter. Shakuntala is moved to the Indian controlled side of Kashmir, where she tries to assume life as a local Hindu girl. However, she is stigmatised by her community as girl who grew up in a Muslim household. Hardayal is anxious for being unable to find a suitable match for her due to the stigma.

It is during this time that she runs into a lecherously salivating Forest Officer Madhu (played by actor Mustafa Qureshi), who stalks her and manages to persuade her father to get her married to him. The marriage takes place, but Shakuntala believes the only person who can touch her body is Dildar. Madhu with the connivance of a local Hindu faith leader Pandit learns of her secret Muslim paramour Dildar. He sends him a fake letter from Shakuntala inviting him to come to the line of control for a tryst. Dildar gets the note and assuming it to be a genuine letter and walks up to the suggested meeting point, where Madhu awaits to exact his plan of murdering him. Shakuntala finds out about this conspiracy and runs towards the meeting point to warn Dildar of Madhu's intentions. Madhu and Dildar are already there. Madhu fires a gun at Shakuntala. She is fatally shot and dies. Enraged by Shakuntala's death, Dildar kills Madhu in an ensuing fist fight. He leaves the site carrying Shakuntala's lifeless body. The film ends with the message that Shakuntala may be just one life lost amongst hundreds of thousands perished and consumed by the brutal realities of partition.

Despite its box office success, reasonably high production value and ace photography, the movie unabashedly objectifies all Hindu and Indian characters, except Shakuntala and her father, as scheming, vile and vengeful. All Muslim characters, here, are inherently upright and conscientious, whereas, the stock Indian-Hindu Madhu and Pandit are sly and conspiratorial who must ultimately pay for their scheming malice. Shakuntala is reduced to a battleground between a

vengeful Hindu-Indian and an honest Muslim love interest. Consequently, Shakuntala must also bear the bullet to save a chivalrous Muslim and to pay her debt to her Muslim saviours through sacrificing her life.

1971 saw a rather delayed release of Director-writer Riaz Shahid's *Ye Amn* (This Peace), perhaps the earliest Pakistani cinematic venture on the Kashmir issue. Earlier titled as *Amn* (The Peace) the film's plot revolves around Hindu-Muslim lives at the cusp of Kashmir's unresolved issue and against the back-drop of Muslim Kashmiris' struggle for political autonomy and self-rule found little favour with Pakistan's censor boards for it suggested 'self-rule'. The movie had to go through several structural and editorial changes and renamed as *Ye Amn* to secure its final release. The movie runs in a flash-back, where a mute, young single mother Amena (played by actor Nisho) crosses the Line of Control from Indian side of Kashmir to Pakistan's side for refuge and unfolds her tale of surviving horrors of Indian occupation of the Valley in writing.

The three key Hindu characters, young Shanti (played by actor Sangeeta), her father the Tehsildaar (local Mayor) Prem Nath (played by actor Taalish), and Indian army commander Col Jagjit (played by actor Adeeb) support the plot through their conflicts. Shanti is Amena's peer and best friend and is in love with her brother, Muslim freedom fighter Nasir (played by actor Iqbal Hassan). Prem Nath is a benevolent mayor but is beholden to serve the villainy of Indian army commander Col Jagjit's brutal suppression of freedom struggle.

Shanti secretly supports Nasir and his freedom struggle. A crucial turn of the plot demonising the commander Jagjit with finality is his raping of Shanti right beneath the stare of a ferocious depiction of Hindu deity Kaali. It is during his worship ritual, that Col Jagjit discovers Shanti slinking in his house. She has sneaked in to get hold of his wireless set and pass it on to Nasir. He pulls her in a fierce fit of lust and rapes her. Shanti, despite her ordeal is able to steal the wireless set and hand it over to Nasir. She too, like Shakuntala of *Lakhon*

mein Aik, is gunned down by a man of her own faith and nationality. And like Shakuntala, she too is redeemed and humanised through the rite of sacrifice for being born on the wrong side of the Muslim-Hindu binary.

Director-writer Riaz Shahid, Art Director Habib Shah and Sound Recordist ZA Baig respectively received Nigar Awards for best screen-play, best art direction and best sound recording for the movie.

The seventies marks an unprecedented threshold in the portrayal of Sikh characters in Pakistani cinema, in the face of political upheaval in the Indian Punjab. By the late seventies, the Khalistan movement, spearheaded by Sikh militants struggling for a separate homeland, 'Khalistan' to be carved out as an independent state out of India was snow balling towards its eventual zenith in the eighties. While India accused Pakistan of implicitly supporting the burgeoning Sikh uprising, it however, turned out to be the very support from Pakistan that helped squash the militant movement.

The interesting coincidence, however is the dramatic shift in portrayal of Sikh minority – so small in number that the national census does not even name it in its head count – in Pakistani cinema during that period and from thereon. Sikh characters in Pakistani cinema are no longer demonised, despite endless tales of Sikh anti-Muslim violence in East Punjab during the 1947 partition.

A point in reference is Director-Actor Sangeeta's critically acclaimed movie *Mutthi Bhar Chawal* (Handful of Rice), released in 1978 based on celebrated progressive Urdu writer Rajinder Singh Bedi's novel *Ik Chaader Meli Si* (A Soiled Shawl/Head Scarf). The movie applauded as Sangeeta's cinematic tour de force, presented the story of a young Sikh widow with all Sikh characters with sensitivity and authenticity. *Mutthi Bhar Chawal* scaled Nigar Award for Best Film (Tayyab Rizvi), Best Director, Best Actress (Sangeeta), Best editing (ZA Zulfi) and Best Special Performance (Ghulam Mohiuddin).

A year later, Pakistan's National Film Development

Corporation (NAFDEC, now defunct) produced a historical drama based on Nasim Hijazi's historical novel *Khaak Aur Khoon* (Dust and Blood), on love and loss in the backdrop of blood-bathed birth of Pakistan. The novelist Sharif Hussain with his much popular nom de plume Nasim Hijazi (1914 – 1996) has remained an influential author adopting historic accounts as the dramatic milieu for his novels, as stylised versions of Islamic political accounts, demonstrating both the high point and decline of Islamic political history.

The movie, just as the novel it is based on, highlights British Indian Muslims' struggle for Pakistan and atrocities meted out to many of them during communal violence and their eventual ethnic cleansing from the East Punjab. Despite its clear glorifying of the Pakistan movement and graphic portrayal of Sikh communal brutalities survived by the Muslim populace – the plot is clear in placing the onus of savagery on connivance and trickery of agent provocateur Hindu Seth Ram Lakshman for inciting the local Sikh youth against their Muslim community for a genocidal carnage. Sikh violence finds, if not exoneration, at least a justification through diminished responsibility in the wake of mobsters' being manipulated by the treacherous Seth.

The shift towards soft imaging of Sikh community is unmistakable in succeeding movies. For example, *But Shikan* (The Idol Breaker) released in 1974 portrays the life of Mohan Chand (played by actor Yousaf Khan) from being a sadistic psychopath to becoming a pious and upright Muslim renamed as Muhammad Ali, ultimately becoming a martyr for avenging communal brutalities against Muslims in British India. The key epitome of evil is villain Hindu police officer Govinda (played by actor Adeeb), who even tries to trade off with Muhammad Ali his imminent execution against his reverting to Hinduism. The hero, of course, must rather embrace his impending death by hanging. Amidst this drama, Pakistan's renowned comedian Umer Sharif plays the role of Sikh Kharak Singh to portray the cliched drunkard Sikh comic given to slapstick and pun, but betraying no 'inherent'

spite.

Similarly, the 1995 movie *Jeeva* has the lovable Sikh couple Neko Singh (played by Ghulam Mohiyuddin) and Bindu (played by actor Neeli) whose bonhomie and blitheness bring vivacity to this otherwise revenge drama.

From mid to early 2000s, Lahore-based Pakistani cinema declined into over a decade long hiatus to a point where the prestigious Nigar Awards were discontinued in 2002. In the meanwhile, a couple of art house style movies such as Director Sabiha Sumar's 2002 Indo-Pak debut *Khamosh Pani* (Still Water) attempted to create an alternative discourse against the very grain of 'patriotic' movies in blurring the binaries and humanising religious diversity.

Khamosh Pani attempts to salvage women's narratives of survival, loss and resilience from the whirlwinds propaganda cinema by tracing the life of Sikh girl Veero separated during the partition and raised as Muslim Ayesha (played by actor Kiron Kher) in Pakistan. The case study compellingly depicts the cost that women of all faiths paid in the wake of recorded history's largest ethnic cleansing, uprooting 15 million people of which more than one million were culled before reaching any destination at all. Women of all faiths were targeted by all sides for killing, rape and abduction to strike what was understood to be an enduring humiliation for the rival community. The movie won several awards including the prestigious Golden Leopard at the 56th Locarno International Film Festival, Switzerland.

Mehreen Jabbar's *Ramchand Pakistani* (2008) unfolds the lives of Dalit Hindu family, against the Indo-Pak border tensions of 2002. The family living in Nagarparkar desert close to the Indo-Pak border become an accidental prey to international conflict. The plot pivots around eight-year-old Ramchand's inadvertent crossing of the border, after an angry altercation with his mother and ending up with Indian border security. His father who follows him too ends up there. A sequence of events leaves the father and the son in custody as unregistered

prisoners for five years, before they reunite with Champa, Ramchand's mother (played by Indian actor Nandita Das). The movie received the Audience Award for Best Film at the Fribourg International Film Festival (Switzerland), the FIPRESCI Prize at Cinefan (Festival of Asian and Arab Cinema), and an honourable mention at the London Film Festival.

With Director-writer Shoaib Mansoor's 2007 movie *Khuda ke Liye* (For God's Sake) the centre of Pakistan's new wave cinema moved from Lahore to Karachi. The 'new-wave' cinema – defined by high production value, slick editing and broad range of topics – has brought a noticeable gravitas to the erstwhile commercial cinema, but largely without any mentionable inclusion of religious diversity. While the youth-led new cinema has largely steered away from the age of simplistic, reductionist caricaturing of the 'other', there is, equally, little portrayal of religious diversity.

Released in 2018, Director Asim Abbasi's movie *Cake* (2018) received a glowing critical recognition. Mike McCahill of The Guardian found it fit for 4/5 stars. He praised Asim's debut: 'Pakistani cinema has long struggled to match its Indian cousin's commercial reach, but this impressive debut from Asim Abbasi feels like a sound bet, and even quietly revolutionary in places.'

Quite unexpectedly, this movie depicts a key character as a young Goan Christian male Romeo (played by Adnan Malik). The plot pivots around contemporary lives of three adult, affluent Karachi siblings and their parents. Their inter-personal conflicts and cohesion bond them into a tapestry of discovering themselves and each other in a time-span of few months. And like any process of discovery this too promises an intersection of deep seated inter-relational bitterness, moments of mirth, surviving grief, and ultimately forging a deeper, more meaningful harvest of human bonding.

Now, the youthful Romeo is introduced as a handsome male nurse with ruminating, reserved and reverently servile care-taking of the ailing father (played by Syed Mohammad

Ahmed). Romeo's late parents too were beholden to the house-hold that he has been summoned to help. Yet, this is not the only support this quiet young man is offering with profound care and sensitivity. He undertook a certain secret duty in the past that averted, then, a catastrophic set-back from ensnaring his employer's household. The other secret that runs through the plot is a rather hushed love interest between him and his employers' elder daughter Zareen (played by actor Aamina Sheikh). Romeo, however believes that there is no scope for this love interest to grow any further beyond email exchanges with Zareen. She too continues to keep it in the closet.

Towards the climax of the movie we learn in a flash back, that he had taken the blame for running a poor village child over in a speeding car to save the younger daughter of the family Zara (played by actor Sanam Saeed) who was in fact driving the car, and had sped off after the accident in panic, and remained unaware that the accident had left the child dead. Her family hastily hatches a plot to save her from being arrested, tried and sentenced. She is misinformed by her family that the child had survived the accident and that his family had gratefully accepted financial compensation. Yet, the truth is just the opposite. The accident victim's family had refused to accept the blood money and were resolute in taking the case to the court of law. The family whisks Zara out of the country making her believe that she's being sent away for higher studies to the UK, while the family loyal Romeo takes the blame and serves a four-year jail term. Unfolding of the truth, however, converges the family at a certain equalising ground, where each family member stands jettisoned of the burden of knowing and unknowing, in order to let life have another take. Romeo and Zareen's muted love-interest finds public expression and union.

Undoubtedly a great movie, riveting performances, unforgettable musical scores, sensitive photography and a resonating screen play. However, the sole Christian character remains as pliant as a willing sacrificial lamb, his unquestioning servitude and loyalty to a Muslim landed gentry, his eventual

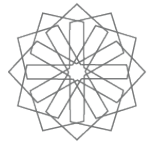
acceptance as a family member at the family's own terms poses a question mark on his agency as an individual. In that, the portrayal of religious minorities in Pakistani cinema has come a full circle – from the platitudinous, to hackneyed and from reductive to jejune. What new has post-Covid cinema to offer, who knows.

The key antecedent for any film industry emanating from and representing life and its varied, fluctuating facets, is to offer moviegoers a reflection of themselves. Yet, the irrefutable case of these reflections being predominantly monochromatic in Pakistani cinema unmasks deeper, structural and historical knots and loose ends in equal measures. Cinematic portrayal and representation of religious, and to a large extent that of ethnic, minorities in Pakistani cinema remains drenched in static stains of political, cultural and historical otherings – without a closure or any evidence of sustained and introspective attempts to addressing them. A much regurgitated pretext in defence of this continual process is that of a general lack of awareness and inter-faith dialogue in the society as a whole. While that too is true to some extent, yet this writer is of the view that othering is not always born of 'lack of awareness' and dialogue does not always occur spontaneously. This writer argues that the processes of othering and erasure are often born out of entrenched bias and institutionalised obsession for similitude enacted with wilful consistency. Equally, for an honest dialogue to enduringly take root and nurture – the ground must, first be equalised.

Unsurprisingly thus, until Pakistan's much celebrated, youth led new wave cinema itself is firstly driven by diversity at all levels; and secondly, it astutely jettisons itself from decades of peddling wilfully misunderstood and misrepresented lives, it might continue to oscillate between perpetuating cinematic othering and erasure of an otherwise ubiquitous religious and ethnic minority existence. Ultimately, it calls for a considered cinematic segue from being the legatee of an inimically 'received' canon to being a vanguard of an honestly 'rediscovered' reality - if the future Pakistani cinema is to

redeem itself from hurling noxiously distorted versions of life rather than reflecting it, as it exists in many of its shades.

Note: The writer is grateful to film-maker and writer Haider Abbas Shah and historian-academic Humza Salman Asif for their insights; and for constantly cross examining the writer on his arguments.



The Language of the Heart

Navid Shahzad

It is only in the 19th century that the modern concept of nation and nationality took on a relevance that the world has never been able to shake off since. Largely a direct consequence of the massive upsurge in the conquest, subjugation and resultant colonization of alien territories, the concept of nationhood remains a fairly recent historical phenomenon. By comparison, the ancient world can be seen to have remained unfamiliar with the idea since 'the citizen' as an individual entity, in the modern sense, did not exist among the people inhabiting the banks of the Nile in North Africa. Ruled over by a Son of Ra or similar deity in human form they traced their civilizational roots to a distant 3300 BC very much like the people settled around the Indus river basin in the Indian subcontinent almost five thousand years ago. Centuries later, and reinforcing Edward Said's theory of 'the other', it is in the Greek encounter with the 'barbarian' that the notion of identity and the self begin to take shape, as the former's use of a distinct Hellenistic language sets the two apart. Herodotus called non-Greek societies 'barbarian,' a word which in his time meant people whose language, religion, ways of life, and customs differed from those of

the Greeks. In time however, the initial exclusionary view that the 'other' was less than human, revised itself to allow the Hellenistic concept of identity to perceive the non-Greek as 'human but different'; while the word 'barbarian' found a new meaning altogether.

By the late 18th and 19th century the language began serving as a powerful rallying cry as a direct result of how a people viewed themselves, and the idea of nationhood became integrally linked with the language that people spoke. An otherwise intellectually sound Dr. Samuel Johnson's diary entry dated as far back as 1773, states that 'languages are the pedigree of nations', which has a decidedly anachronistic flavour to it. Yet closer to home, the notion found its perfect articulation in 1971, as a Bengali speaking East Pakistan broke away from the Urdu speaking western half, to form the independent republics of Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively. There can be no doubt about the fact that language is a means towards creating an identity, an idea fully supported by the Arabic speaking Naguib Mahfouz as he asserts that: '*to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture*'.

In the 20th century the captivating slogan 'one nation, one people, one language' implying that one's identity was directly related to the language one spoke, began to assert itself. Linguists define a 'speech community' as one which uses the same linguistic code while according to them a 'discourse community' refers to the common ways in which members of a social group use language to meet their social needs. This is a view of language and culture that focuses on the ways of thinking, behaviour, and evaluation shared by members of the same discourse community. That language plays an important communicative role in the life of the native speaker in his own linguistic community is an undisputed fact, but for the writer as opposed to the speaker, it is also the most critical tool for the expression of his ideas. Be it verse or prose, fact or fiction, art or science, language is the life giving force for the men and women who venture into the world of ink and pen. That some languages fall into obscurity for lack of use while others continue to thrive, is

also true since usage adds to and expands vocabulary in practice, which explains the need for periodic revisions of lexicons, dictionaries, and thesauruses.

One of the major outcomes of recent world events has been the creation of an entire new vocabulary resonating with the heart breaking experience of exile. As a result of individual and communal global movements engineered by a world constantly at war with itself; words such as refugee, émigré, diaspora, nostalgia, rupture, deportation, banishment, homesickness et al, with their visceral emotional impact have found a fresh nesting space among global lexicons. The present essay concerns itself with what Edna O'Brian chillingly lists as the 'many words there are for home and what savage music can be wrung from it,' by a heart in exile forced to 'invent' a language for itself.

Perhaps language would be the first note played in a symphony of exile as the sound of one's own language has the ability to create a home away from home. The rupture caused by exile from the language one associates with home, forces a re-evaluation of identity as can be seen during the settlement of Muslim refugees after their blood soaked exodus from India to the newly created state of Pakistan in 1947. Large numbers of '*Muhajirs*' settled in parts of the Sindh province adhering stubbornly to their identity later labelled 'Urdu-speaking'. Almost seventy-four years later, the sociocultural entity remains largely intact as a co-culture but with the addition of a strong political face patched onto its original visage.

In viewing language, philosophers such as Bakhtin relegate its use for communication purposes to a secondary function, as in their opinion the need to express oneself far outweighs the functional aspect. Consequently, language development is seen in the context of a speaker's efforts to enhance the ability to express, rather than merely communicate with others. Occasionally, this leads to hard choices such as that faced by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. Raised at a cultural crossroads, Achebe chose to write in a language that

according to him 'history has forced down our throats.' In this case, using a language other than the writer's own, presents itself not just an artistic necessity but an imperative; especially when seen against the backdrop of the devastating effects of colonialism on the sociocultural, political and psychological life of the indigenous Igbo. Appropriating the language of the 'centre' i.e. the colonizer, and using English as a medium of expression cannot only be seen as a political act, but an attempt by Achebe to reclaim a segment of African history and correct the misrepresentations of the past. Symptomatic of the moral obligation that burdens most postcolonial writers, it is a perfect instance of using language almost like an instrument of war.

Yet, for some writers, language appropriation remains unnecessary, since they believe that their own language is powerful enough to define who they are in terms of a specific topology and sociocultural entity. The concerted attempts, therefore, to 'fashion a brave new man' in a postcolonial world trying desperately to heal its old wounds, must necessarily take cognizance of the fact that a human being is born into a language as much as into a culture, and being deprived of access to either, results in incapacitating traumas both at individual and collective level. Exile as a form of protest or necessity may provide some temporary relief, but the most devastating effect of moving away from home, is the necessity for a re-evaluation of the 'self' which remains romantically attached to the life left behind.

The late humanist Edward Said's description of the exile's life echoing the thoughts of the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius emphasizes that: '[exile] *requires detaching oneself from all belonging and love of place*'. In lay language and without the attachment of any poetic frills, exile is a state of limbo – a nomadic period during which one belongs nowhere and everywhere at the same time. Negotiating the distance between the remotest place on earth to the proximity of one's own heart, therefore, requires a massive reorientation of the 'self' which includes in Adorno's view a valuable, moral aspect as '*it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home.*' Thematically, the lost homeland

is a state in which the exile, voluntarily or per force, lives with what Wallace Stevens calls '*a mind of winter*'; i.e. a state of being in which the light never shines as brightly as it did at home, the bread is never fresh enough, salt tastes of anything but salt, and the scent of hand churned butter or smoke emanating from a wood stove become a distant memory. Exile, therefore, may be seen as a condition of the mind rather than a physical state, as can be seen in literatures of exile and the diaspora, but perhaps the bitterest harvest is the literature produced by the writer/poet while physically present at home but with a heart in perpetual exile from the conditions prevalent in the homeland.

Though the idea of exile is a universal one, the rationale for voluntarily opting for it or being forced to leave – as in banishment, lists an enormous spectrum of motives ranging from religious persecution at one end to political dissent at the other. Historically, according to popular religious belief, the first exiles - Adam and Eve, were forcibly evicted from Eden as punishment for their transgression against an unforgiving Yahweh, never to return. Biblical records list other notable exiles such as Moses seeking the Promised Land for forty years only to die before he set foot in it; just as in another part of the world and another time, Hindu mythology sees the goddess Sita exiled twice. Initially accompanied by her husband Rama, Sita accepts a second solitary exile in deference to the pressure of public opinion upon her husband, during which she gives birth to twin sons, Loh and Kush. In the same part of the world, the princely Siddhartha Gautama transforms into the Buddha discovering *nirvana* during a permanent voluntary exile from his previous aristocratic life. Centuries later, halfway across the world, classical literary history details the trials of Ulysses as described in Homer's epic *The Odyssey*, with the protagonist wandering for almost nine years as punishment for the sack of Troy, before finally returning home to a patiently waiting loyal wife and son.

Even the briefest compilation of famous exiles evidences that being in exile, either as a form of punishment or protest, as an escape from notoriety or a primeval instinct for survival;

aligns itself with no discernible boundaries of status, rank, calling or justice. While every exile may not necessarily be a victim, history is witness to numerous cases of overenthusiastic censorship, judicial and moral policing by the state, resulting in an exodus of some of the brightest minds that the state itself may have produced. The ancient world for example, exiled Seneca as far back as 41 AD on allegations of adultery which were never proved; while Aristotle's voluntary exile from Athens after Alexander's death attributed to charges of impiety – a crime punishable by death, signals the origin of institutional attempts at asphyxiating the right to speak one's mind. Confucius spent thirteen long years on the road propagating reforms for better governance only to return home disappointed by the lack of response, even as 14th century Florence condemned Dante to exile for life for his political views. In the 18th century, accusations of indecency and affront to religion prompted the' *Chevalier de Seingalt*' i.e. Casanova's imprisonment, but a daring escape freed the alchemist, spy and church cleric, who then spent the rest of his life wandering Europe. While Napoleon's first exile to Elba as an outcome of the Treaty of Fontainebleau helped reinstate the Bourbon dynasty in the 19th century; the French emperor of Corsican ancestry's second exile to the island of St. Helena drew a romantic English response from the poet Lord Byron, who presented him to the world as the epitome of a persecuted, lonely romantic hero, a trope associated with the poetry of the age. As a matter of historical record, island exile is not an exclusively European or western practice, since feudal Japan is known to have used *shimanagashi* as a form of punishment for political offenders which entailed imprisonment on the island of Sado in the Sea of Japan.

Recent history is witness to the fact that the 20th century is no stranger to the state of exile either, as Trotsky's flight from his country in fear of his life in a Russia headed by Stalin proves. Down south in Latin America, the Argentinian army general and three time elected President Juan Peron, overthrown in a 1955 coup after his re-election, was forced into exile in Paraguay from where he eventually moved to settle in Madrid. However, Peron made a spectacular comeback after

eighteen years in exile and was elected president for the third time with an overwhelming majority. 'Germany and I don't speak the same language any more,' exclaimed the enigmatic, famously high cheek boned, self-exiled actress Marlene Dietrich, when asked to return to her native Germany over run by Nazis. Similarly, celebrated theatre director Bertolt Brecht whose drama techniques have been embraced worldwide, fled Germany fearing persecution as Hitler rose to absolute power. In the same year, on a visit to the US, one of the world's most celebrated personalities Albert Einstein, chose never to return to his native country and was eventually granted US citizenship in 1940.

Consequently, it would be safe to assume that exile, whether forced or chosen, is a permanent rather than a temporary state since the return home, if ever, never really compensates for the years lived away from the homeland. Though political history, literature, philosophy, art and music et al. may cite the cases of an enormous number of notable exiles, all of whom have contributed to the sociocultural richness of the world's shared histories such as the Caribbean Nobel prize winning writers, V.S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott; the early 20th century is dominated in particular, by several towering figures who remapped what it meant to be deprived of home. With their light constantly under threat of being snuffed out by the pursuing dark shadow of their native states, these men and women, either fled under duress or voluntarily left their homes to write and speak about people, universal injustice, the rights of man and, by default, their longing for the place they called home. On further examination and despite obvious sociocultural, political and linguistic differences and distant geographies; it is interesting to note that a single common thread often features powerfully in the exile's life. If the motherland beckons like a lighthouse on a stormy night with the promise of safe harbour; the mother tongue does the same.

What the earliest born of this special group of 20th century versifiers, the Turkish Nazim Hikmet Ran who spent the better part of his life either in prison or living abroad, missed

most of all was the sound of his language. For Hikmet, each new destination that he travelled to, and there were many – such as Paris, Prague, Varna and Moscow where he eventually died of a heart attack at the relatively early age of 61, would first be sifted thoroughly to identify any Turkish speaker; just as every city he sought asylum in, would serve only as a backdrop to the overwhelming memories of home which permeated his work. That the flight from home exacts a heavy toll on the heart in particular, may be evidenced by Hikmet's emotional reaction to an image as simple as the sight of cucumber soup in a blue bowl, or in more profound thoughts such as the sentiments experienced and recorded in his memorable lines written in Varna:

It's not a heart, but a rawhide sandal, made of buffalo leather
hoofs the rocky roads constantly
but does not get torn apart

Like many exiles, characteristically carrying nothing of any material worth, Hikmet's manic travels saw him travelling with a valise of books by Orhan Veli, Melih Cevdet and Oktay Rifat whom he called 'the best poets of Turkish' and pockets bulging with memories which appeared with time to become etched in the lines of his face, just as much as they became engraved upon his soul. Hikmet's citizenship was officially withdrawn for what were seen as 'anti-state' activities by the Turkish government; prominent among them being his poem titled *'23 Sentilik Askere Dair'* (On the Soldier worth 23 cents), written at the height of the Korean War in response to US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles' Senate address. Needless to say, the revelation that Turkish soldiers were paid 23 cents per month compared to the lowest ranking US soldier's payment of $70 per month created a predictable enormous stir at home and abroad!

Writing only in Turkish, Hikmet's language became the sole umbilical link with the country he called home helping him create what can only be described as 'a homeland of words' since it was the most important constituent of his identity:

The words of my language are like precious stones.

going on to add that:

I am a jeweler's apprentice. / I want to crash these stones into one another and make voices that are unheard of

Compared favourably with the likes of literary giants Lorca, Aragon, Faiz and Neruda, Hikmet produced a treasure trove of innovative poetry, plays and film scripts; of which, *The Epic of Sheikh Bedruddin* and *Human Landscapes from my Country* rank as poetic masterpieces. The latter, a voluminous work in traditional oral epic form and written entirely while in prison from 1938 to 1950 uses elements from various genres he was familiar with, such as the novel, drama and film.

Despite the fact that as an Istanbul based intellectual, Hikmet had had little or no interaction with the Anatolian peasant he wrote about; it was his imprisonment in Bursa prison that provided him with the opportunity to experience the real life of ordinary men in an ironic validation of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's cry: *Bless you, prison, for having been in my life!*" Banned in his own country for thirty years, Hikmet's verse-novel sprawls over half a century of tumultuous events such as the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions with its first book opening with the lonely boarding of a train from Istanbul's Haydarpasha station in 1941. As the train snakes across the country, capturing cinematic vignettes of a turbulent confrontation between tradition and modernity, hope and despair, Hikmet's optimism is clearly visible in his unswerving loyalty to the idea of a world molded by human rather than a god's hands as in the lines:

My books are printed in thirty or forty languages
But in my own Turkish, in my own Turkey
I am banned

only to optimistically declare that:

I write poems
they don't get published
but they will

and they were, but not during Hikmet's lifetime! Opting for

free verse instead of conventional syllabic meter, Hikmet's poetry broke across traditional barriers including those of Turkish traditional poetic form while using earth, homeland and language as focal points, as he firmly believed that the freedom afforded by free verse did more justice to the vocal properties of the Turkish language, which he cherished in lines such as:

I love Turkish language in the way a peasant loves
his land, a carpenter loves his wood and grater.

Such views inevitably lead to the conclusion that just as the outbound poetic physical self, journeys away from the homeland – boarding train, bus, dinghy, ship, plane or truck, a simultaneous inner journey takes the secret self on a parallel inward voyage into the murky sea weed infested depths of memory, desire, yearning and loss. Reliving snatches of life from a past that is permanently out of reach, the poetic imagination compensates by laying out vast expanses of landscape seeded with remnants of a life lived, a woman loved, a child abandoned.

Yet ironically, life in exile does not necessarily mean a physical departure since the state of exile may exist in one's own land, within the circle of one's own familiar life like a worm infested apple. It follows then that the worst form of displacement is that of the heart, for the fleeing exile may succeed in taking a small memento from home – a fistful of earth, a flop eared toy, a crumbling brick broken off the house wall; but in actual fact, the fugitive heart takes away nothing but weed-like memories that sprout up everywhere. The exiled heart is, therefore, unique, as it leaves no sign on the door, nor a forwarding address where a tear soaked letter may find its way; for it is a condition so forlorn and barren as to rival the vast emptiness of earth's known deserts.

At the second Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference held in Guinea-Conakry in 1960, Frantz Fanon's closing speech 'In the Name of Africa,' addressed a crowd of Asian and African writers. Rarely given as much attention as it deserves, Fanon's speech in which he shared the objectives of the moot specially

addressed his 'Asian comrades' as he said: '*We, Africans, say that we wish to break, one after the other, all the chains of imperialism and colonialism. Your voice, like an echo, replies that this is also your target.*' And that *'We, Africans, say that national independence is incompatible with the persistence of more or less disguised forms of foreign oppression. You, comrades of Asia, say just the same.'* Fanon's speech was a call for action from an African '*us*' to an Asian *'you'* i.e. from one wretched group of peoples to another. As a result of which, the sixties saw the emergence of an extraordinary amount of Afro-Asian anti-imperialist literature being produced by writers from countries across the globe such as Turkey, Egypt, India, and South Africa among others. The Pakistani Faiz Ahmed Faiz, whose poetic works have become synonymous with a cry for freedom had already foreseen the need for solidarity among the oppressed people of the world in what became known later as a movement propagating Afro-Asian nationalism with his prescient poem '*Come back Africa*,' written and recited while imprisoned in Montgomery (now Sahiwal) jail in Pakistan in 1955:

I am Africa,
I have fashioned myself in your shape.
I am you,
my gait, your leonine stride.
Come forth, Africa!
Come, stride out like a lion.
Africa, Come forth!

Of the many translations available, Mustansir Dalvi's use of a cryptic 'come forth' rather than the far more popularly used 'come back, Africa' phrase implies an unveiling of the self rather than a return to a previous condition. The Dalvi version reads better as it speaks for a powerful Africa merely obscured behind a curtain waiting to be lifted, rather than an Africa seeking to find its way out of a darkness it had embraced.

Faiz's Turkish counterpart is just as easily identifiable, as Nazim Hikmet Ran's poetry commits itself along with Faiz to anticolonial politics and global solidarity across national and international borders, along with an essential element

of the personal and the romantic. The unity of purpose and solidarity with all people regardless of linguistic, cultural, geographical or racial differences is the hallmark of both poets in the wake of an intensified Cold War; a period during which a French, West Indian Fanon echoing the ideas of French philosopher Maryse Choisy, asserts that remaining neutral in times of great injustice implied an unforgivable complicity. That Hikmet and Faiz proved far from complicit and chose voluntarily to lend their voices to the people of an oppressed, colonized world is clearly visible in the former's lines such as:

We've come from the four sides of the World
We speak different languages and understand each other
We are green branches from the world tree
There's a nation called youth, we are from it

Hikmet talks to ordinary people, farmers and peasants knee deep in mud and poverty hailing them in his poetry with:

Brothers and sisters,
let our poems, paired with a feeble ox, plough the land;
let them walk into a swampy rice field up to their knees;
let them ask all the questions;
let them harvest all the lights.

further identifying himself with the people of Africa and Asia as much as he speaks to his own with:

Never mind my blond hair,
I am an Asian;
never mind my blue eyes,
I am an African.

Unlike the Biblical Tower of Babel and its cacophony of sounds, neither poet confesses to facing any difficulty 'talking' to people who speak a language unfamiliar to him, since communication takes place on a fundamentally spiritual rather than linguistic wavelength. There is a perfectly heart-warming instance of the Urdu writing Faiz and the Spanish writing Neruda spending an entire evening in Paris, reciting poetry in their own languages to each other without the need for an intrusive translator or explanations! As poets who spent

substantial periods of their lives in exile, versifiers find a great deal in common since the transnational nature of their writing and life in general, forges strong relationships rooted in the struggle for sociocultural and political egalitarianism. Happily, the world has benefited widely from excellent translations of both Hikmet and Faiz in a number of languages which has helped enhance their reputations beyond the borders of their own countries and linguistic boundaries. Hikmet has been translated into more than fifty languages and was awarded the Soviet International Peace Prize which he shared with Pablo Neruda in 1950 while Faiz's writings translated into English, German and Russian in particular, won him the International Peace Prize in 1961. Also having been a recipient of the Lotus Prize for Literature in 1976, Faiz died in 1984 in Lahore two months after he was nominated for a Nobel Prize after a brief illness which required hospitalization.

Despite being separated geographically by vast land masses, Faiz and Hikmet have much more than their Marxist political and romantic beliefs in common. The lives of both celebrated and much loved poets mirror each writer's untiring efforts to speak to and for the common man, demand justice for the voiceless people who inhabit the lands of their birth and elsewhere, court imprisonment and risk their lives even as they suffer the soul destroying agony of exile. Writing in their own languages — one in Urdu, the other in Turkish — both pack hope, sorrow, nostalgia and home sickness in poetry which is as romantic as it is political. In using their own languages, the Pakistani and the Turk not only vocalize a full throated roar of universal protest against exploitation and oppression of the poor by capitalistic, authoritarian regimes; but more importantly, speak to the masses in a language that they recognize. Though Faiz and Hikmet view history as narratives of dominance in which the 'colonizer' is identified as the oppressor and the 'colonized' as the wretched of the earth, which is amply illustrated by even the most rudimentary reading of their works; their poetry also bears the stamp of each poets' distinct nascent romanticism visible in the aching nostalgia for the people and places they have been forced to leave behind. So marked is their commitment to a universal cause that in a talk on *"Problems of Cultural Planning in Asia",* Faiz

clearly identified the horrific impact that colonization had had on occupied countries*:*

'What was handed back to the newly liberated countries, therefore, was not the original social structure taken over at the point of their subjugation but the perverted and emasculated remnants of the structure. Superimposed on these remnants were cheap, spurious and second-hand imitations of Western cultural patterns by way of language, customs, manners, art forms, and ideological values.'

The term 'culture' itself which is commonly used as a synonym for Western civilization, was popularized by the British anthropologist, Sir Edward B. Tylor who propagated the 19th century idea that societies pass through a linear development process commencing with the most primitive stage of 'savagery', leading to a middle stage termed 'barbarism,' culminating in what is known as 'Western civilization.' Such a definition which assumes that Western cultures are superior to others, not only highlights the presence of an active hubris but also serves as a facile *raison d'etre* for the conscious exploitation and systematic rape of resources that western countries carried out in their colonies. It is this history of exploitation and subjugation that unite both Hikmet and Faiz in making common cause against internal as well as external sociocultural, political and economic oppression. In actual fact, both poets appear to have so much in common that their differences pale in comparison to their similarities.

Hikmet's life was anything but sedate. A decidedly colourful youth saw him smuggling guns to Mustafa Kemal and working as a school teacher in Bolu to show his active support of Ataturk during Turkey's War of Independence; studying Sociology and Economics in Moscow (1921 – 28) and joining the Turkish Communist party in the 1920's. Though Faiz did no gun running, he did stop teaching in the face of an alarming rise in global fascism to join the British Indian Army as a second lieutenant in 1942. Rapid promotions saw him work his way up to the rank of lieutenant colonel while working as Assistant Director of public relations on the staff of the

North-Western Army. For his services, Faiz was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire, Military Division in 1945, but resigned from the army in 1947 when he opted for Pakistan.

In matters of the heart however, the handsome Hikmet proved quite the romantic, as he contracted a short lived, marriage while in Moscow and subsequently lived with a dentist before his return to Turkey in 1928 without a visa since his passport had been cancelled. On his return, Hikmet continued to contribute to newspapers and periodicals and write plays while his forays into writing scripts and directing films at the Ipek Film Studios were done under the pseudonym **Mümtaz** Osman. Pardoned in 1935 in a general amnesty, Hikmet was sentenced by a military court in 1938 to twenty-eight years in prison for his incendiary writings against the state, which parallel Faiz's imprisonment for sedition in the now (in)famous Rawalpindi Conspiracy case – an alleged Soviet-backed coup attempt at over throwing Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's government in 1951. In 1935 Hikmet married Piraye Altinogly, a woman with striking red hair, whose father was editor of the newspaper *Tercuman-i-Ahval* with whom he had two children. Some of the most romantic poems that Hikmet wrote were to his woman with red hair as in:

my memory will vanish like black smoke in the wind.
Of course you'll live, red-haired lady of my heart:

and then on a whimsical note adds:

in the twentieth century
grief lasts
at most a year.

Subsequent romantic adventures led Hikmet to marry and divorce again until he met and married Vera, who was to be the love of life. In this respect, Hikmet is unlike Faiz whose life is marked by his quiet steadfast loyalty to his beloved English wife Alys, despite his penchant for the company of beautiful women and enjoyment of the regular evening drink. Though Faiz wrote no poems in Urdu for Alys, his letters to

the woman who stood by him through prison terms, years in exile and even longer years of despair while bringing up his daughters single-handedly, are as much poetry as they are prose. Completely at home in both languages, while working on the script of '*Jaago Hua Savera*' (The Day Shall Dawn), a film about the life of fishermen in what was then East Pakistan, Faiz wrote from a hotel in Dhaka:

> 'In the last three days, there has been no sun, the trees are dark with rain and the wind feels heavy with nostalgic regrets. My window brings memories of Simla and Kashmir and in the midst of work and discussions there are sudden stabs of homesickness and thoughts of you and the urge to drop everything and return. I could work so much better if you were here, but it can't be helped so I'm trying to rush through it as speedily as I can'.

The film won a Gold Medal at the 1st Moscow International Film Festival and was selected for screening as part of the Cannes Classics section in 2016 after a hectic search for lost prints. The language cross over which also incorporates a marvellous switch from one genre to another as evidenced by the letter written; show cases Faiz's linguistic versatility as much as it speaks for his choice to write his poetry in Urdu. Similarly, Hikmet's forays into theatre evidence his use of Brechtian techniques as major themes of loneliness, betrayal and the evils of capitalism are examined in plays such as *Unutulan Adam* (The Forgotten Man, 1935) helping to consolidate his reputation as a playwright of some reckoning in addition to his established reputation as a poet.

As for their work, the enormous compendiums of writings that Hikmet and Faiz produced are easier to grasp if one divides their works roughly into phases, each with its distinct flavour and tone. Of the three phases identifiable in Hikmet's case, it is the middle period of his thirteen-year imprisonment that produced one of his most famous works, *Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı* (The Epic of Sheikh Bedreddin). Proving yet again that literature and the written word are powerful weapons, Hikmet was imprisoned when military cadets were found reading the poem about a 15th century revolutionary religious leader in Anatolia. Among his later major works is the

five-volume *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (Human Landscapes from My Country, 1966-67), a 20,000-line epic in which one can see his optimism struggling with ground realities as the police state prevailing in Moscow of the 1950s bore little resemblance to the romantic visions of his youth. Yet for all his disappointments, Hikmet's poetry continued to celebrate modernization and its promise of economic and socio political possibilities:

The destiny
of iron
coal
and sugar
'and red copper
and textiles
and love and cruelty and life
and the branches of industry
and the sky'
and the desert
and the blue ocean,
'of sad riverbeds
and plowed earth and cities'
will be changed one morning,
one sunrise when, at the edge of darkness,
pushing against the earth with their heavy hands, they rise up.

In fusing the intimacy of the individual voice into an address to the millions he wanted to be heard by, Hikmet became immortalized in Neruda words as 'the voice of the world.' Though the last and perhaps saddest phase is the poetry he wrote after his release from prison during his long exile from Turkey, it was during his seemingly unending incarceration that his poetry reached the apogee of poetic prowess. During this phase, the tonal quality of his poetic voice began changing subtly to incorporate a poignant vulnerability which urged him '*to write poems that speak only about me, addressing just one other person, and at the same time call out to millions*'. The result was a marvellous innovation with the intimate romantic 'I' being replaced by a collective, inclusive 'we' which is also dramatically visible in Faiz' poetry as he writes:

We shall see
It is certain that we, too, will see
the day that has been promised us

Nine years younger than Hikmet, Faiz as a colonial subject, was a member of the Communist Party in an undivided India as well as an active member of the Progressive Writers Movement which dominated the pre and post-independence literary scenes in India and Pakistan until the 1950s. Receiving the standard education of the day which included essential instruction in the Quran, Urdu, Arabic and Persian, he later pursued degrees in Arabic and English Literature – which he taught for some time in the Indian border city of Amritsar and the Pakistani city of Lahore. As a young man, Faiz witnessed first-hand the movement for Indian independence resulting in the independence of India and Pakistan (1947) just as Hikmet had earlier witnessed Turkey's *Kurtuluş Savaşı* (War of Liberty) which resulted in the formation of the Republic of Turkey (1923). Needless to say, the events of their respective charged political climates had a profound effect on Hikmet and Faiz's persons and poetry. Faiz in particular, while attempting to erase the divide between the spoken word and content, visibly shifted from the classical lyrical emotional world of the *ghazal* in Urdu to incorporate elements of almost Gadamerian aesthetics as he sought to position art in man's experience of the world he inhabits. Simultaneously deconstructive and constructive, such an approach to aesthetic theory remains a rare achievement which very few of Faiz's contemporaries concerned themselves with, barring a few notable exceptions such as Noon Meem Rashid, Miraji, Majeed Amjad and Sahir Ludhianvi. Similarly, in Hikmet's case, language and its usage become of paramount importance and are fundamental to his sensitivity, as whispers of Yunus Emre and Fuzuli can be heard clearly in his work. On the face of it, the poem *Kerem Gibi* (As Kerem) with its reference to a Turkish folk hero who turned to ash for love reads simply enough. However, when read against the backdrop of a deeply embedded Turkish tradition of melting lead to ward off *nazar* (the evil eye) and in conjunction with the practice of melting lead to cast bullets; the poem becomes nothing short of a call to arms and action.

Published in 1930, the poem serves not only as a turning point in his own poetry as much as it revolutionized the entire canon of Turkish poetry. The tendency to interpret both poets, therefore, in simplistic revolutionary terms alone, as is often done, is to do both a great disservice as their contribution to the form and content of their respective literature and language is equally important.

Faiz's much admired predecessor and Pakistan's renowned national poet, Allama Mohammed Iqbal had already wrought a paradigm shift in the idiom of Urdu poetry from its familiar and popular ornate diction towards one which was as direct as it was infused with modern philosophy and rational thought. Faiz went a step further in moving from a traditional use of image and metaphor, to couch his strong political views in metaphors and similes associated with the beloved. The new diction, strongly reminiscent of the sensual metaphysical poetry of John Donne, proved effective in eliminating the stamp of a particular sociocultural entity by universalizing longing, sorrow and loss. While using the body of the beloved as a metaphor for the homeland, Faiz may have incurred the wrath of feminist enthusiasts in recent years, but no one can dispute the fact that the content and diction employed by Faiz has helped change Urdu poetry forever.

Nonetheless, to view Faiz and Hikmet only as 'Marxist/communist' poets or 'revolutionaries' is to reduce each poet's work to a single dimension. However, much Faiz's poetry may be seen as revolutionary in spirit, there are aesthetic and clearly Islamic dimensions to his poetry which have not received the attention that they deserve. While the myopia may be attributed to the effects of applying only western modes of postcolonial literary analysis; such a view distorts and reduces his poetry to a single fragmented dimension. Placing Faiz exclusively among the pantheon of postcolonial imaginations struggling with knotty issues surrounding nationhood and class divisions is to ignore the specific cultural historicity which informs the poet's work. Similarly, in Hikmet's case, revolutionary fervour apart, there is an intense preoccupation with life and death in whimsical musings such

as when he ponders over how his coffin can be transported from the fourth floor of his apartment building to the ground:

I mean you must take living so seriously
that even at seventy, for example, you will plant olives-
and not so they'll be left for your children either,
but because even though you fear death you don't believe it,
because living, I mean, weighs heavier

In many cases, the diminishing of the multidimensional work of a poet may be due to the personal interpretations that translators lend to the original work e.g. Kiernan, the first to translate Faiz into English, rendered largely literal translations as opposed to Agha Shahid Ali's lyrical translations that prompt such facile labelling. The best example of 'reducing' poetry to a single dimension may be seen in the popular interpretation of his popular anthem-like poem *Ham Dekhain Gay* (We shall see). Seen largely in terms of a revolutionary movement, the poem loses its far greater layered significance as its original Arabic title *Va Yabqā Vajhu Rabbika* suggests. With the change of title, an obvious interpretation of the poem highlights only the political tone, confining it to an earthly motivational experience; whereas, if read as it should be, with reference to the specific surah and ayat of the Quran it takes on a whole new meaning altogether as can be seen in the apocalyptic references to:

That has been written on the eternal tablet

which is a clear reference to the heavenly record of men and their (mis)deeds on earth, followed by the lines:

the heavy mountains of injustice and oppression
will blow away like (fluffed) cotton wool

and:

When from the Kaa'ba of God's world
All the idols will be taken away

With its obvious references to the Quranic description of the Day of Judgement and the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) action of removing all pagan idols from the Kaa'ba's interior

after his victorious entry into Mecca; the poem is far more than merely a 20th century Marxist call to 'watch and wait' or an example of a despairing, secular modernity waiting for a revolutionary turn of events. Given Faiz's educational background and his literary interests, it should come as no surprise that his poetry, however 'modern' in tone it may be, remains rooted in a classical Indo-Persian tradition lent additional complexity by echoes of Sufi and Islamic practice. The result is that Faiz's poetry gains dimensions beyond that of mere postcolonial revolutionary fervour, which parallel Hikmet's verse in its identifiable undertones of Sufi influence such as that of Yunus Emre and folk poetry. However, the distinct presence of Islamic practice and an Indo-Persian tradition in Faiz's poetry strike a distinctly different note from that of Hikmet's verse which on the whole remains largely rooted in Turkish folk tradition as much as it is influenced by the modernist avant-garde movement popular with young Soviet poets known as Futurism. Differences apart, philosophical, quasi-religious and decidedly Sufi influences lend poetry a life beyond the present moment as well as a timeless, lyrical quality which allows it to be sung and/or recited. The works of Hikmet and Faiz have, therefore, proven to be fertile ground for singers and many an evening has been spent in rapture listening to their hypnotic lyrics.

While the language a person speaks is one that the speaker identifies with and must be seen as part of his identity and culture; one can see that Faiz and Hikmet rise above their particular identities as the Pakistani and the Turk subsume themselves within a universal 'self' struggling not only against imperialism, capitalism and exploitation, but also personal conflicts and nostalgia as can be seen in Faiz's cry:

How will I return to you, my city?

A problem to which he finds a unique solution by asking the city to tell all its lovers to turn the wicks of their lamps high so that he may find the way back to his beloved 'city of many lights;' just as Hikmet's sorrowful promise to his son:

Memet,
I'll die far from my language and my songs,
my salt and bread,
homesick for you and your mother,
my friends and my people,
but not in exile,
not in some foreign land
I will die in the country of my dreams
in the white city of my best days

As full of a yearning nostalgia for the beloved 'white city' of 'many lights' or loved ones as these verses are; their importance grows ever larger due to the strong note of optimism voiced by each poet despite their respective sorrows. Ironically, it is this very homesickness laden with an apparently indestructible optimism that dictates a visible transformation in each poet's diction, language, content, meaning and metaphor attributed to the idea of the homeland which is crystallized splendidly in Hikmet's line:

The country that I like most is the earth

In such a state, the importance of one's own language cannot be overemphasized as can be seen in the life of the imprisoned poet as he states that prison is a place where:

you shiver there inside
When outside, at forty days' distance, a leaf moves.

with the sound advice to:

Look at your face from shave to shave,
forget your age,
watch out for lice
and for spring nights,
and always remember
to eat every last piece of bread--
also, don't forget to laugh heartily.

In the poem '*Some Advice to Those Who Will Serve Time in Prison*' (1949), Hikmet expresses his will to survive despite the tedium of prison life by reading and writing without rest, while encouraging '*weaving and making mirrors*'; with the final bit of advice delivered in a congenial conversational tone:

I mean, however and wherever we are,
we must live as if we will never die.

Meanwhile, in a post-independence, infant Pakistan, Faiz worked in various capacities as a political activist, journalist and editor, trade unionist and member of the Communist Party which landed him in prison in 1951 for an alleged Soviet backed conspiracy to overthrow the government. Incarcerated for four years, he became a 'state guest' again for a few months after the imposition of General Ayub Khan's 1958 martial law. The only Pakistani to have received the Soviet equivalent of the Nobel prize in 1962; Faiz also served as editor of *Lotus,* the journal of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association in Beirut during self-imposed exile from General Zia-ul-Haq's rule in Pakistan. Such wanderings beg the question – why should a man risk life and liberty to write poetry, or anything at all? What must be the finest raison d'etre marking Faiz's poetry is his own observation that:

The true subject of poetry is the loss of the beloved.

Life, therefore, is no more nor less than an all-consuming pursuit of the 'beloved', a word that defies obvious simplistic identification in all seven volumes of poetry that Faiz produced. Just as the tone of Faiz's poetry refuses reduction to an obviously single layer, similarly, the use of the word 'beloved' carries several layers of meaning ranging from the complex mystical layers of Rumi's use of the word, to Sufi thought and tenets, to more secular references such as person, home or a country. The word 'beloved', therefore, metamorphoses itself from a physical entity to serve almost as a synonym for the emotions of 'hope' and 'love' itself. As for 'loss', the small word expands in ever growing ripples to cover enormous territory as it includes references to the loss of home, family, country, livelihood and anything one holds dear. True to the spirit of Marxism, the loss of livelihood as a critical means of survival is stated with tender yet fierce fervour as:

for there are sorrows other than heartache, joys other than love's rapture.

which is perhaps the most satisfying as a translation to those who know Urdu since it appears closest to the original musicality and lyricism of the poem.

Translation has always been sharply contested territory since losses far outweigh the gains. As Robert Frost stated wisely: *'what gets lost in translation is the poetry,'* which is a persuasive argument in favour of poets possibly translating their own works. A case in point is Faiz' letters in English to his wife while in prison, which were translated into lyrical Urdu by the poet himself after much persuasion. The scepticism of the Spanish writer Miguel Jugo is, therefore, a predictable response since he draws attention to the fact that: '*An idea does not pass from one language to another without change*', which in view of several extant translations of a single Faiz poem, each at variance from the other, reinforces Jugo's view of the problematic role that translations play despite their obvious benefits in universalizing the written word. That Hikmet and Faiz have survived the problems of literal or poetically rendered translations is in large measure due to the topical and contextual importance of their works. Hikmet, (formidably translated by the husband and wife duo of Randy Blasing and Dr. Kutlu Mutluk Blasing) immortalizes the survivors of the nuclear holocaust and warns against it with his poem *Kiz Cocugu* (Hiroshima Girl); in which the haunting specter of a seven-year-old Japanese girl comes to every doorstep to plead for peace, ten years after she had died in the horrific mushroom explosion. The poem's fierce anti-war message strikes a particularly sensitive note as a world struggling with its conscience simultaneously flexes its muscles at its growing nuclear arsenal. The poem, sung in Turkey as well as worldwide in other languages including a stirring rendition by the legendary Joan Baez, is known by various titles such as 'The Girl Child,' 'I Unseen' and 'I Come and Stand at Every Door.'

With a vast selection of themes ranging from war to love, what is truly remarkable about both men is that in letter or poem there is absolutely no sign of bitterness or rancour, no railing against a cruel fate, no teeth gnashing or oath

taking for revenge. Instead there is a passionate love of red blooded life fed by a steady stream of longing and hope for better things to come. In Faiz's letters to Alys, for example, the poet delicately balances a wistfulness and hope while confined within the four walls of the cell he lives in, despite being denied pen and paper on occasion. The Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde writing for the Guardian while imprisoned in Reading jail, said that 'a beautiful love letter is as much about the writer as it is about the object of affection'. What then should one make of Faiz as he writes a letter to Alys from prison dated 8 October 1952?

> *Beloved,*
>
> *This morning the moon shone so brightly in my face that it woke me up. The jail bell tolled the half hour after four…. I got up and sat in the verandah opposite my cell and watched the morning come. I heard the jail lock open and shut as the guards changed the key and chains rattle in the distance and the iron gates and doors clamp their jaws as if they were chewing up the last remains of the night's starry darkness. Then the breeze slowly rose like a languid woman and the sky slowly paled and the stars seemed to billow up and down in pearly white pools and sucked them under. I sat and watched and thoughts and memories flooded into the mind.*
>
> *Perhaps it was on a morning like this that the moon beckoned to a lonely traveller a little distance from where I sit and took him away into the unknown and the traveller was my brother.*
>
> *Perhaps the moon is at this moment softly shining on the upturned faces, painless now in death, of the murdered men in Korean prison camps and these dead men too are my brothers. When they lived they lived far away in lands I have not seen but they also lived in me and were a part of my blood and those who have killed them have killed a part of me and shed some of my blood. Albeit they are dead, as my brother is dead and only the dead can adequately mourn for the dead.*
>
> *Let the living only rejoice for the living.*

Sorrowing for his own brother who died while preparing to visit him in jail, Faiz lassos the light of a soft moon to include strangers in a faraway land as he reasons that the colour of blood remains the same regardless of where it is shed. The only difference worth noting according to the poet is between the realms of the living and the dead – not flag, country or cause.

While both Faiz and Hikmet write poetry which is simultaneously public and private, they are also prolific letter writers. Since distance is a recurring theme in the work of both poets, almost every other poem works like a hand written dispatch mapping its way across vast land masses. In an age where the art of letter writing has all but disappeared due to a churlish but impossible to ignore technology; Faiz's letters revive memories of that incomparable poet Mirza Ghalib, whose exquisite conversational prose laid the foundation for a less Persianized, easily accessible Urdu. Faiz's prison letters to Alys written in English for obvious reasons, are now available in book form, while Hikmet's three volume, posthumously published record of correspondence reveals both men as masters of the art of letter writing in addition to being great poets. Shakespeare's advice on how to make love last for an eternity by writing it down, appears to have been well received by the Turkish and Pakistani prisoners; for their incarcerations resulted in the publication of monumental works which have ensured them a permanent place in the canons of Turkish and Urdu literature.

Hikmet, who once described poetry almost as a gladiatorial sport calling it '*the bloodiest of the arts*,' also wrote his epic *Human landscapes from My Country* while in prison; saluting the practitioner of poetry whom he proclaimed was '*the engineer of the human soul*,' while Faiz's sentiments about what poetry should be about have been referred to earlier. What is of great significance is the fact that both poets see themselves as playing a specific role in the life of a global community since neither specifies an identifiable group of people that each aligns with. Similar to Faiz's use of the word 'beloved', Hikmet's word 'engineer' racks up images of design, architecture, mechanics and construction either of a Divine or earthly nature, where the material to be 'worked' on is neither steel nor brick, but something as ephemeral as the 'soul'. The implication being that the material may be bent and moulded to specifications; almost as though an enormous fired up kiln belching smoke and unbearable heat, produces one small but perfect object – rather like Khayyam's softer pliable metaphor of the potter at his wheel of clay. The energy produced by the phrase is

almost of a muscular tactile nature hinting at the juggernaut that a Marxist Soviet Union was capable of becoming but much to Hikmet's disappointment did not. Lyrical as Hikmet's poetry is, it can be as chilling in its matter of fact narration of the brutality that human beings are capable of:

But Selim was no Communist.
He didn't even know what communism was.
...But the cops thought different.
They laid Selim on the floor. And when Selim got up,
he couldn't step on his feet.
They laid Selim on the floor.
And when Selim got up,
he couldn't see.

Like Hikmet, Faiz's poetry also maps its way through an enormous diversity of people and violence such as his poem '*Ham jo tareek raahon main maare gaey'* (We, who lost our lives on the dark pathways) referencing the execution of the Rosenbergs in the US for their communist beliefs and alleged anti state activities or his rousing African anthem '*Come back Africa'*. Post his release from prison, which ironically garnered enormous prestige and fame for him rather than any kind of ignominy, Faiz, in what can be seen as his 'second' phase of poetic maturation, began participating at international forums like the Asian Writers and Afro-Asian Writers' Conferences which greatly increased his standing internationally. While Hikmet wrote in the only language he could, Faiz who was comfortable in English as much as he was in Punjabi, Persian and Arabic chose to write in Urdu despite arguments such as Achebe's to the contrary.

The author of 'Things Fall Apart' opined that in order to do justice to the African experience there was a need for '*a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings*,' adding an ominous '*Let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English for we intend to do unheard of things with it.*' Anyone who has read Achebe can see that he does just that, using dialogue and phrase in English in unconventional ways to capture the native spirit of his people. Rich with metaphor and aphorism, Achebe uses 'the language of the centre' to

draw allusions between the life of humans and a fecund nature e.g. '[Ikemefuna] *grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season, and was full of the sap of life*.' Despite the visible leap across worlds between the phrases '*my spirit tells me*' and '*I have a hunch*', Achebe's views on English have not been accepted widely by writers who write in their own languages as Hikmet and Faiz have done.

The present essay, therefore, in limiting itself to two writers who consciously resisted the temptation to write in a language other than their own; celebrates a Turkish and an Urdu poet's leonine efforts to create what can only be called 'the language of the heart,' requiring nothing more than an alphabet consisting of love of humanity, justice and inexhaustible hope.

Pakistan and Turkey have more things in common than two poetic voices rising in a crescendo and breaking like enormous tidal waves against shorelines at home and abroad. The civil and military conundrums that both countries have had to steer through have resulted in an extreme polarization of society, a dangerous shrinkage of space for intellectual activity and independent thought, a widening gap between the medievalism of rural populations and the 21st century digital space readily embraced by urban centres as well as increasingly hostile confrontations between the lure of global modernity and Islamic tradition. Turkey's attempts at reviving an Ottoman past and the rise of a militant religious fundamentalism in Pakistan are reflective of the political and cultural crossroads that each country finds itself at.

While the prime criteria for any work of art and the imagination to survive beyond its own time is its relevance which effectively ensures its timelessness; Hikmet and Faiz pass the test with flying colours as they are as relevant today, if not more so, than when they first put thought to paper. On the one hand, their continuing presence is visible in the efforts of young poets struggling to emulate the imaginative worlds of Hikmet and Faiz; while on the other and perhaps more importantly, their influence can be traced to the manner in which their

linguistic innovations have helped change the idiom of their respective languages. Simple as it may seem, the staggering quantum shift from the folk tradition of Turkish poetry and the Indo Persian tradition of the *'ghazal'* to the razor sharp precision of powerful free verse and the '*nazm'*; the moving, unforgettable metaphors and images created by both men have monumentally restructured the linguistic landscape of Turkish and Urdu poetry for all time. Secondly, in a world so bereft of hope, so mired in the quicksand of sustaining daily life, the voices of Hikmet and Faiz nourished by their belief in the dignity and inherent ability of man continue to trumpet the promise of a new dawn of freedom for every careworn human being burdened by crippling misery.

Fifty-eight years after the passing of the legendary Turkish poet, the man who was loved as much as he was vilified enough to have his citizenship cancelled; makes the optimism he swore by, appear even more significant in a world ravaged by a killer virus. Rediscovered and idolized today by his countrymen as well as the world, Hikmet can be credited not only for his unique style, but also for his impact on the Turkish language which has influenced his native Turkish as well as progressive Urdu and Persian poetry since the early 1990s. On the global front, Hikmet's footprint can be traced in his universal call for hope in a world beset by a hydra of challenges ranging from terrorism, war, disease, hunger and horrific poverty. The man whose books were banned in his country is now ironically seen as a 20th century literary giant straddling across continents as he writes about countries, people and places as diverse as Abyssinia after the Italian occupation, China – while viewing the Mona Lisa in Paris, or the power of resistance against American imperialism on a trip to Cuba. Honouring the poet whose humanism can most easily be seen as he plays the role of a world historian in verse, UNESCO declared 2002 the Year of Nazim Hikmet to mark the 100th anniversary of his birthday. Similarly, Faiz's extensive writings about universal issues such as human misery, inequality and injustice raised the standard for all mankind, just as much as the rhythm and structure of his poetry has impacted modern Urdu at

home. Thirty-seven years after his death, the poet's work remains as fresh and relevant as it was when he first wrote it. In blurring the boundaries between the erotic and the revolutionary through the constructive power of the word, both poets used their verse to raise awareness about real issues such as access to a morsel of bread and a productive, peaceful life on a planet that has enough resources for all if shared equitably. Hikmet and Faiz's greatest legacy lies in their influence on a generation of young men and women growing into adulthood in a century other than their own.

In ancient times, societies with no canonical texts turned to poetry as the chief source of all stories about the gods. Plato's extreme position in banning the poet from his perfect Republic allowed only for didactic poetry since he attributed imaginative and lyrical poetry with a seductive transient beauty powerful enough to mislead the unwary. Hikmet and Faiz's poetic works are as seductive as they are beautiful, because they celebrate universal truths viewed through the lens of the life of every man. Rather than mislead, their poetry offers counter narratives to imperialism, structures of power and exploitation in their search for universal truths. Even Plato would have approved of such divinely inspired verse which reflects a syncretic spirit reinforcing itself across time and place as it speaks of resilience and courage in the face of adversity. Perhaps life itself has ironically exacted the greatest revenge against the constant vigilance of modern day states who fear the word of the poet as much as they fear a powerful enemy. A younger generation of Pakistanis may not be as well versed in the Urdu language as an older generation was, but in some inexplicable way, they appear to have imbibed the very essence of Faiz's view of life. The states' minions who hounded both poets during their lifetimes, are now captive audiences seeing their own children belting out the poetry of Hakim and Faiz written in Romanized Urdu and Turkish to the accompaniment of percussion and bass guitars at festivals and local '*melas*'!

Throughout their lives, Hikmet and Faiz remained eloquent first hand witnesses to the travails of the heart in exile. While

it is tragic, that two of the most important figures of 20th century Turkish and Urdu literature should have had to watch their children grow up in black and white photographs longing to hear their voices; it is equally ironic that for the many nameless, faceless people who lived far removed from them, the voices of the fathers once heard, cannot ever be forgotten. Replete with hope, sorrow, anger, and yearning, Hikmet and Faiz's Turkish and Urdu fuse into a common language which negotiates across the world's lands, languages and identities in songs celebrating all humanity.

While accepting the Prince Claus Fund for Literature and Culture award in Amsterdam 2004, the celebrated Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish in his acceptance speech thoughtfully remarked:

> 'A person can only be born in one place. However, he may die several times elsewhere: in the exiles and prisons, and in a homeland transformed by the occupation and oppression into a nightmare. Poetry is perhaps what teaches us to nurture the charming illusion: how to be reborn out of ourselves over and over again, and use words to construct a better world, a fictitious world that enables us to sign a pact for a permanent and comprehensive peace ... with life.'

In living just such lives, Nazim Hikmet Ran and Faiz Ahmed Faiz used only the language of the heart to create a better richer world not just for themselves, but for all humanity. Not many men can hope for a better epitaph.

The Raag of Inclusion and the Ras of Love

Fatimah Ihsan

Kaafir-e ishqam, musalmaani mara darkar neest
I am a pagan of love, I do not need religion
– Amir Khusrau

Alaap[1] – the opening

Migratory birds from across the border, with long, protracted shadows chirp, causing a cacophony of sounds, perhaps, trying to piece a devotional chorus for the approaching dusk. Singing of the sun's journey, of its tedious routine, day in day out – one particular segment of the day witnessing itself and passing on its story to the next hour – like a relay. Each day, split into several moods, is laden with cosmic diversity, yet it manifests as one – from multiplicity to oneness and from unity to diversity – this is the order of nature, its various colors. Difference is beauty. Difference is necessary for beauty.

The sun has a deep hue, my heart can relate to, melt to and revel in. It has eased

1 The improvised section of a raga, forming a prologue to the formal expression.

up its piercing gaze, lost its accumulated aplomb of the day and transmuted to a pensive tinge. It is weary – this is the golden hour of nostalgia, of wistful yearning, longing and vulnerability. It is Asr, time for Salat ul Wusta (prayer that marks the middle) or time for a suitable raag. Whether it is salah, or raag any particular time of the day has a vibration or frequency that is honored by a matching ancient etiquette; tapping into cosmic energy at the right time is to align oneself with the harmony of all things; to meaning that looms larger and is more significant than the self, or form. This was the way of our spiritual ancestors.

Ustad Salamat Ali Khan's rendition of Multani Raag fills my living room as does the deep gold of the setting sun, traversing the ancient and present, simultaneously. There is a mitigated calm in the repetition of the bandish[2]*. I choose to play this piece to worship nature's current tint – not just to be in synch with it but also to let go of it slowly, savoring each moment as one time-appropriate raag blends into another till the night deepens to a lull. It is then my thoughts begin to unravel.*

The structure of Indian classical music is premised upon a time frame, divided into two parts; from sunrise to sunset and then sunset to sunrise. Each segment is divided into four components, called, *prahar* that last for three hours each. Based on Hindustani classical music (North Indian which different from its Carnatic counterpart), each *raag* falls within particular *prahars*.[3] This feature is quite interesting as it is believed that played at the appointed time, any *raag* is at the prime of its melodic beauty. The connection of day and night (and seasons) with the *raag* is associated with a definite mood or sentiment that nature provokes in humans.[4]

The aim of any particular *raag* is to create *ras* or a state of bliss. This is the capacity of music (or any other art form) to transmit and induce an emotional state or an aesthetic consciousness. This means that emotions that generally create havoc in a person's life (anger, shame, guilt, fear, etc.) have the potential to sublimate through an association with ecstasy and rapture.

2 Composition.
3 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244016674512
4 https://medium.com/shadja/raga-time-association-8d479e0463db

Some equate the onset of bliss thus spurred to be similar to having a divine encounter or experiencing God, imbibing the ragas with a transcendental quality.

The invocation of *ras* is an interesting aspect because it alludes to the possibility of attaining an emotional state by being in cosmic harmony through a corresponding *raag*. Fascinating too is the definition of *raag*, which means to dye or color – indicating that one's attention needs to be in harmony with the rise and fall, the ebb and flow of creation and to be colored in its various shades, rather than be extractive and aloof.

The ragas are based on a timeless wisdom to induce a sense of wellbeing at the opportune cycle in the day (or season) so that one is attentive, receptive and in awe of all of creation, without discrimination. The idea is to transmute the creative impulse (in this case music) into a meaningful and often worshipful act to establish connection to other than the self. In many forms of Indian classical music, such as the daadra, thumri or kaafi, the refrain is a yearning and longing for the beloved who is courted with a pleading and surrendered attitude. This essence of submission in the raag is the edifice on which the Qawwali is structured; a form of devotional singing (Sufi kalam) that some claim was introduced to the subcontinent by Amir Khusrau (d. 1325).

This essay employs the ragas and its constituent parts (*alaap*, *jhor*, and *gat/bhajjan*) as metaphors to compose a narrative immersed in harmony and love as universal attributes for peaceful coexistence. Just as the *raag* is in synch with nature, an attempt is made to carve out an account that is in tune with compassion and understanding as alternative means of seeing social reality. In extrapolating this, the piece celebrates and revisits vernacular tradition of knowledge production that speak of love (esoteric, inner traditions); and its multi-generational transmission through experiential learning (from heart to heart) such as Tassawauf, Sufi poetry, and qawwali.

What this essay does not do is to provide an elaboration of the social, historical milieu in which selected components of my writing unfold; rather the tone of this composition is akin to sitting by a flowing river in the present, but being increasingly curious about its source.

The symbology of the ragas is also significant because Indian classical music is a foundational stream of syncretic and inclusive traditions of the subcontinent. Music is key because it has no boundaries of caste or creed; rather it portends to transport one beyond the confines of time and space and all others limiting aspects.

Using a Sufi lens, this paper uses the gender performativity lens to indicate that diversity and inclusion were often accepted practices in the history of the subcontinent (although these varied from one group to another and from one region to another and across time). Different ideas introduced in this composition are strung together through a common *sur of ishq* (Divine Love) aimed to produce the *rasa* (intoxication) of love.

Jhor[5] – the unfolding

I grew up in a low-income housing neighborhood in Quetta with a diverse demographic where Hazaras, Pakhtuns, Punjabis and other ethnicities lived together in relative peace and harmony. We observed different festivals and religious holidays and participated in each other's rituals and celebrations without being self-conscious of our own respective beliefs. This tranquil rapport was not inspired by any liberal or secular imports of political correctness but due to a hangover of a generally, tolerant, multi-religious and syncretic past.

Past? History? But what does it mean when it is fissured, bleeding and when it ostensibly unhooks you from all that your genes still carry? Do I accept the number of times we mark 14 August as a sufficient and honest inheritance? Surely,

5 When the music becomes elaborate.

nothing of substance comes out of myopia; it is like sitting on a treasure and feeling impoverished. Our history, which we are either unwilling to own or it is artfully concealed from us, is rooted in 5,000 years of civilization. This fortune cannot be dismissed in the name of patriotic amnesia, rather one can attempt to find clues that unearth positive retentions and bask in its present and futuristic possibilities.

It is for this reason that I look to the past to understand the present bigotry and violence in our society. I look to our roots to understand how things were in order to make sense of the deterioration that has set in our social fabric. I do this in remembrance of the Hazara friends and acquaintances I grew up with, now cold in their graves in the name of 'sectarian violence' and frenzied politicking which no one owns up to. I need to understand this senseless brutality that sets me apart from them – the other – superficially, on account of facial topography, or sacred belief. But despite the disquiet that rages within like a storm, something holds me together; a type of truth that my intuition holds, surrounded by a glimmer of hope.

However palpable the pain, the dignified thing about reading history or revisiting the past is to understand it with compassion, openness, and curiosity and without a sense of moral judgment. Since in hindsight what one can rescue from the past is nothing other than the grace with which one accepts events.

I dream because this is a choice. There is trust in me, still.

The Rhythm of Narrative Making

Before delving into the syncretic tradition of the Indian subcontinent, which espouses the idea of coexistence and pluralism, it is important to understand what the latter term means. Pluralism is not a stand-alone term; rather it makes sense when it is understood as a response to diversity.[6] In

6 Arshad Alam, "Islam and Religious Pluralism in India," *India International Centre Quarterly* 40, no. 3/4 (2013): 47-64

other words, pluralism is the recognition and importance of all forms of religious, political and cultural diversity that enables coexistence of disparate realities.

Having said this, pluralism cannot be understood by everyone in the same manner, as it is also a reflexive and subjective understanding. This means that in order to understand it, we need varied contexts that carry diverse voices and understandings of the same phenomenon. This is how social reality is seen and understood, unhooked from Universalist claims.

The point is that a poised view is only possible when we listen to different opinions and make informed choices – the way we see things and understand them postures narratives, therefore seeing things as they are is key to being appropriate to them, to do justice to them. For instance, if we look to the past with a feeling of being done in, it would be easy to weave a wounded narrative that puts the onus of our misery on the other, thereby justifying blind spots to one's own responses to history. However, if we turn to our history and view it from the lens of gratitude for some of our rich traditions, we have the possibility to hope and be optimistic.

What the British Raj did in India to rupture the moral, social and ethical fabric is documented ad nauseum, but there is not enough scholarship that facilitates inward looking and self-reflection. I do not want to recreate resentment about the past that only exacerbates a sense of victimhood inducing mistrust and conspiratorial thoughts. This is not to say that the violence that has been committed through colonization is justifiable, but that truth lurks in liminal spaces, between two polar opposites. To see things from the vantage point of veracity is to see them as they are.

The variety of the narrative I present here is analogous to listening to any *raag*; sensing and concurring with its meandering and intoxicating free flow in a realm that is perhaps imagistic but not so literal. My hope is that without making any moralistic pronouncements, I express contemplations in a manner where the importance of meaning making and

connection to other-than-self are understood. This is the crux of this piece.

To this end, I make use of the rich literary tradition of Sufis, as they believed that '…poetry was the ideal medium for expressing the truths of the most intimate and mysterious relationship that human beings can achieve with God, that is loving Him and being loved by Him'.[7] In this manner, what Sufi poets wrote about was experiential, subjective and imbibed love for all and without discrimination.

Sufism and Pluralism: The melody of Divine Love

In order to understand Sufism's (also Bhakti movement) influence on syncretism in the subcontinent, it is important to first understand the teachings they espoused. A caveat that I would like to flag here is that it is not possible to address the historical trajectory of religious pluralism instituted by the Mughal Emperors, or to go into details of how Hinduism and Sikhism influenced Sufism in the subcontinent or vice versa, these are matters best left for another piece and they are well documented elsewhere. What is relevant to bring up here is the commonality in their understanding of Divine Love as a shared leitmotif.

Defining Sufism[8] is a formidable task because language cannot describe the experience of the inner realm, *batin,* which is what it is about. An oft-quoted saying is that 'Sufism is a name without a reality, but it used to be a reality without a name'.[9] Therefore, Sufism cannot be explained but one can attempt to understand it as an esoteric tradition that defies labels and categories, which cannot be captured under any tag.

7 William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A beginner's Guide* (Denmark: One World Publications, 2000).

8 Commenting on the distinctions and branches in Sufism is not within the purview of this article.

9 Saying by Ali the son of Ahmad from Bushjani eastern Persia, quoted in Chittick, *Sufism*, p. 1.

The prominence of Sufism as a popular term with its broad manifestation is generally attributed to the British Orientalist who wanted an expression that could refer to the various facets of Islamic civilization bypassing negative stereotypes.[10] I do not mean to imply that the British coined the expression since this was already in use by various Islamic scholars and Sufi teachers but that they instituted this term as a common allusion to the 'soft side' of Islam. However, the point of this essay is not to discuss the etymology of Sufism or its evolution but to understand its view of reality and its embodiment, which provides a curious inroad into our discussion.

The Sufi view of reality is based on the teachings of the Quran and Hadith which have been adapted and interpreted by various Sufi teachers and dervishes (ascetics). The first *Kalma* (*Shahdah*) recited by Muslims bears witness that there is no god but God (*la illaha illala*), which means that there is a discernment between the Real and unreal and the Absolute and the relative – that there is God and then anything other than God. This indicates that the *Shahdah* makes a distinction between that which *is* and that which is secondary or consequential, it draws a line between a negation and an affirmation.[11] In short, one can surmise that the meaning of the *Kalma* indicates that there is no reality, no creator, but God; and Muhammad is His messenger, the embodiment of divine love and mercy. As also beautifully encapsulated by the Sufi saint and poet Hazrat Sultan Bahu (d. 1691):

> In the nectar of Kalma I bathed and purified myself;
> To the Kalma I was joined in marriage.
> It was Kalma that, in the end, performed my last rites.
> It was Kalma that adorned my grave.
> With the Kalma I will go to heaven;
> Through the Kalma I will be cleansed of my sins.
> Those who are called by the Lord himself
> Find it hard to turn their backs on Kalma.[12]

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 https://sufipoetry.wordpress.com/2009/11/15/kalam-hazrat-sultan-bahu-8/

Based on their understanding of Reality, Sufis believe in love for the Absolute or God, which is the cornerstone of this Islamic tradition. To them God is not a transcendental Reality but one that is proximate and closer than the jugular vein. This is why Sufis have an intense affinity for the Divine quality, *al-Wadud* (the Loving One), one of the ninety-nine names of God.[13] Their predilection is based on an understanding of a Hadith-e Qudsi[14] in which Allah refers to Himself in relation to creation as: 'I was a Hidden Treasure that Loved to be known so I brought creation into existence'.

This coupled with many references in the Quran allude to all of existence as a divine Love story as also explicated below by Shaykha Shahbano Aliani[15]:

> *The Beloved* wants to be Known and Loved (worshipped) so He Creates *the conditions for this Knowing and Loving in the form of Existence.* Divine Creation, propelled by Allah's Love to be Known and Loved, brings forth new life, including human beings. This Impulse of Creation is the realization of potential, which was until that moment hidden. Through this manifestation in form – from the most concrete and material to the most subtle – Allah choreographs a grand, sublime seduction to make human beings Know and fall in Love with Him so that they cannot help but surrender in awe-inspired and utterly devoted worship.[16]
>
> This means that God created humans (out of Love) so that they can know and love Him. Here knowing means to become familiar with and human beings are the only creatures that have the capacity to have a relationship with and know Him as is indicated in this saying:

13 Tanvir Anjum, "Bridal Symbolism in the Sufi Poetry of Islamicate South Asia: From the Earliest Times to the Fifteenth Century", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture,* XXXIV, no. I (2013): 1-16.

14 Divine saying.

15 Sufi teacher in the Shadilia Darqawi Order (d. 2019).

16 Shahbano Aliani, "The divine Love Affair: Exploring Creativity From a Sufi Perspective", *Medium*, 11 April 2016, https://medium.com/@shahbano/the-divine-love-affair-318d6e023b28

'To know Him is to love Him'.[17]

Rabi'a Al-Adawiya Al-Basri (d. 801), a Sufi saint and poet is attributed with ascribing unconditional love to God – it is said that she would wander the streets of Basra with a bucket in one hand and a burning torch in the other. Upon inquiring what she planned to do with them, she is reported to have said: 'I want to burn the heavens and put the fire of hell out. The fear of hell makes people worship God and the desire of heaven makes them do good'. This was a phenomenal insight into the relationship of humans with God and her own poetry reflects this unstinting Love:

> I have loved Thee with two loves, a selfish love
> and a love that is worthy (of Thee),
> As for the love which is selfish, I occupy myself
> therein with remembrance of Thee to the
> exlusion of all others,
> As for that which is worthy of Thee, therein Thou
> raisest the veil that I may see Thee.
> Yet is there no praise to me in this or that,
> But praise is to Thee, whether in that or this.[18]

Divine Love is also the central theme of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi's (d. 1273) poetry:

> 'Love is the kernel, the world the shell; Love is the sweetmeat, the world the cauldron'.
>
> 'But for pure Love, how should I have given existence to the celestial spheres?
>
> I erected the heavenly wheel so that you might understand Love's exaltation'. [19]

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (d. 1752), Sufi Saint and poet from

17 Anjum, "Bridal Symbolism in the Sufi Poetry of Islamicate South Asia" XXXIV:1.

18 Margaret Smith, *Muslim Women Mystics: The Life and Works of Rabi'a and Other Women Mystics In Islam* (London: Oneworld Publications, 1994), p. 126.

19 William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 198.

Sindh, also emphasizes the same theme of creation and Divine Love:

> The multiplicity of creation is in search of God, and its Origin is his beauty – this is what Rumi said. If you Remove the veil from your heart,
> you will behold him within.

Similarly, the opening lines of Heer by Waris Shah (d.1798), imbibe the same message:

> *Awal hamad khuda da vird karye*
> *Ishq kita su jag da mool mian*
> *Pehlan aap hi rabb ne ishq kita*
> *Te mashooq he nabi rasool mian*
>
> First of all let us acknowledge God (who is self-evident),
> who has made love the worth of the world,
> It was God Himself that first loved,
> and the prophet (Muhammad (PBUH)) is His beloved)[20]

Based on this understanding of Divine Love, how do Sufis relate to the world around them? How do they interact with others, and how are caste, creed, sexuality and gender or other social markers of difference treated? The answers to these queries are best understood by seeking instruction from the literary works of some exclusive Sufi poets from our history.

For instance Rumi draws a distinction between form (*surat*) and meaning (*m'ana*). He rebukes those who look at the world around them and within themselves and do not understand that they are looking at a veil over reality. He calls it a dream or a prison, something of a trap:

> If everything that appears to us were just as it appears, the Prophet, who was endowed with such penetrating vision, both illuminated and illuminating, would never have cried out, :Oh Lord show us things as they are![21]

He elucidates that form is the outward appearance (*zahir*), whereas, meaning is its unseen and inward (*batin*) reality. Meaning is attributed to God and form is a shadow of that

20 https://allpoetry.com/Waris-Shah
21 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, p. 19.

meaning. What this indicates is that the world is a collection of many different forms and each displays its own meaning which is its reality with God (this understanding is also found in other religions).

The purpose of the form is not to simply exist for its own sake but to manifest a meaning above and beyond the self.[22] Explained in this manner, the human form laden with its biography of race, class, gender, sex, ethnicity is only a veil or a shadow reality. Understanding this, Sufis attempt to engage with other human beings without prejudice since all forms carry a meaning that is linked to Divine Reality and in this manner; every person is a face of that Eternal Reality. It is for this reason that Sufi poetry is tinted with resistance to socially accepted norms and engagement with others based on discrimination. For instance Baba Bulleh Shah (d. 1757), says: [23]

Sab ikko rang kappa da ae
The whole of cotton has one color.
The warp and threads longitudinal,
The threads of breath and the shuttle; Seed and reed, and roles of cotton,
Prior to weaving that is spun;
They of themselves their names declare, One is distinct from the other.
The whole of cotton has one color;
If different kinds of cloth prepares,
Some cloth of finer threads appears. Course and thick, and fine muslin,
But all of them with similar spin;
From roll of cotton comes out fiber, Disguised curiously Creator.
The whole of cotton has one color

Or this:

Neither Hindu nor Muslim
I sit with all on a whim.
Having no cast, sect, or creed,

22 Ibid.
23 https://www.thesufi.com/sab-ikko-rang-kappaa-da-ae-punjabi-kalam-by-bulleh-shah/

I am different indeed.[24]

Bhakti poets such as Bhagat Kabir (d. 1518), steeped in the syncretic tradition of the subcontinent, mirrored the same sentiments (reflecting the intra-religious and cultural fusion that took place when Sufis saints settled in different parts of India and how the notion of divine love found its pair in the idea of *prem)*:

Burra jo dekhan may challa
Burra na milya koye
Jo munn khoja aapna
Tau mujh say burra na koye

I set out to find evil,
but found none,
when I probed within,
I found one

This strain of self-blame is also found in the Malamatia tradition within Sufism (of which Bulleh Shah was one). The Malamatia Sufis try to conceal their spiritual gains by engaging in behavior that makes them less prominent (for instance using objectionable language). They believe in earning the disdain and rejection of others by downplaying notions of piety and discouraging self-importance and vanity. Perhaps one of the reasons this is done is to blur the boundaries between sacred and profane as this primary distinction leads to many others resulting in bias premised on notions of morality.

Realizing that form has a lesser meaning than Essence or Reality, Sufi saints had a blasй attitude about one's layered identity. Although he belonged to an upper class, Bulleh Shah is said to have worked for a dancing girl for 12 years.[25] Not only this, he belonged to a Sayyed family (descendants of the Prophet PBUH) but chose to become a spiritual disciple of a lower cast *Murshid* (teacher) earning the wrath of his

24 Kalam Baba Bulleh Shah, translation by Taufiq Rafat
25 Jurgen Wasim Frembghen, *Journey to God: Sufis and Dervishes in Islam* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 72.

family, which he wrote about[26]:

Bulleh Nu Samjhawan Aaiyaann Bhaena Tey Bharjayee-yan
Man Lay Bulleya Sada Kena, Chad Day Palla Raaiyan
Aal e Nabi Ullad e Ali, Nu Tu Kyun Lee-kaan Laiyaan
Jeyra Saanoun Syed Saday Dozakh Milay Sazaiyaan.
Jo Koi Saanu Raie Aakhe, Bhisti Peenghaan Paian.

Bulleh Shah's sisters and sisters-in-laws came to convince him.

Bulleya, please do as we tell you and leave the Arain's (his guru's) company.

You are born into the family of Prophet, you are heir of Ali,

So why do you ruin your family's name like this.

Those who address me as Sayyed, shall be condemned to hell.

Those who address me as Raie, shall ride the swings in heaven.

These verses indicate the devotion and love Bulleh Shah felt for his spiritual master, which transgressed all incongruent boundaries. This is the essence of Sufic practice, which grants significance to the other (being a facet of the Eternal Reality) without any accessories of race or any other prejudices.

Sufis believe that the ego or *Nafs* manifests through these categories of difference especially when one is attached to these identity-forms. A common prayer that most Sufi's make is to 'die before death'. Knowing that the form is transient and its attachments to the world and identity artificial, the intent behind this prayer is to loose one's distinctive veils and to die metaphorically. This is a powerful understanding, which translates into practice through granting significance to and serving the other, regardless of how the form manifests through different social markers.

26 https://www.azkalam.com/bulleh-shah/bulleh-nu-samjhawan-aaiyaann-bhaena-tey-bharjayee-yan-lyrics/

Sufism, Gender and Sexuality: The Chorus of Inclusion

Long before Western feminists and scholars understood the fluidity of gender and rescued it from the confines of biological sex, Sufi poets and saints had preempted its temporal nature and exhibited no anxiety twisting accepted gender norms. But the way Sufis understand the complementarity of the masculine and feminine forms prompts keen attention.

Sufis consider the masculine and feminine not in terms of the 'science of body' but in terms of what these signify in divine terms. According to one understanding, to be a true Muslim means to submit oneself willingly to God and to open up oneself to receptivity towards His guiding light. In Sufic parlance, the feminine is considered to be a receptive state in relation to God (the Actor, masculine trait), and that all human beings are first 'feminine' before acquiring any other traits.[27] This essentially means that all humans are born in a surrendered state before egoist (*nafs*) peculiarities take over through socialization.

In the Sufi literary tradition, how the feminine is played out and connected to divine love is through the use of symbols or metaphors. Sufi saints and poets have always made use of symbols to express mystic experiences, which were otherwise difficult for the layman to grasp. This means that parallels are drawn and expressions borrowed from love between a man (the masculine God) and woman (the feminine soul) to indicate surrender and earnest devotion to Divine Love.[28] For instance, Amir Khusrau, taking on the feminine voice, expresses his love for his *murshid* Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325) (who represents Reality) in the following verse:

Gori gori bayyan, hari hari churiyan
Bayyan pakar dhar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Bal bal jaaon mein toray rang rajwa

27 http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/womenoflight.html
28 Anjum, "Bridal Symbolism in the Sufi Poetry of Islamicate South Asia".

Apni see kar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Khusrau Nijaam kay bal bal jayyiye
Mohay Suhaagan keeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Chhap tilak sab cheeni ray mosay naina milaikay

My fair, delicate wrists with green bangles in them,
Have been held tightly by you with just a glance.
I give my life to you, Oh my cloth-dyer,
You dyed me in yourself, by just a glance.
I give my whole life to you Oh, Nijam,
You've made me your bride, by just a glance.

At times a similar metaphor is also expressed for the relationship between God and human self, where He is described as a Bridegroom and the soul is the bride. The singularity of the bridal metaphor is also seen in other mystical traditions such as Judaism and Catholicism. Bridal symbolism is also a driving theme in Punjabi Sufi poetry, such as that of Shaykh Farid al-Din Masud, popularly knows as Baba Farid (d. 1265) who belonged to the Chistiya Sufi Order[29].

Like the Sufi and Bhakti literary traditions, Guru Nanak also employed the bridal metaphor:

> According to a *shabd* of the *Guru Granth*, Nanak classifies human beings or souls in two categories: *duhangan* and *suhagan*. *Duhangan* refers to those unlucky women whose love remained unfulfilled, who failed to achieve their love, or are deserted by their Husband (God), whereas *suhagan* refers to those lucky women who enjoy union with their Husband, achieve their love and thus reap the fruit of their past actions.[30]

In addition to male poets and saints who made use of bridal symbology, Bhakti women poets referred to themselves as the brides of God. For instance, Akka Mahadevi, (d. 1160), a rebel and a mystic professed her love for Shiva and rejected human love. Not only this but she left her family behind and traveled alone, naked, in search of her beloved. This was a very courageous step for a woman living in a patriarchal society, as a peripatetic lifestyle was not looked upon

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.

favorably for women[31]. So deep was her commitment to her beloved, she wrote[32]:

People,
male and female,
blush when a cloth covering their shame
comes loose
When the lord of lives
lives drowned without a face
in the world, how can you be modest?

When all the world is the eye of the lord,
onlooking everywhere, what can you
cover and conceal?

Another female Bhakti poet of the 12th Century, Mira Bai (d. 1547), an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna is well remembered for the *bhajans* she composed for him. She was a Rajput princess whose royal education consisted of music, religion and politics. She was married to Bhoj Raj, crown prince of Mewar but her husband died soon after. Mira Bai was a rebel and her religious pursuits did not suit the established royal patterns as she spent most her days in her private temple worshipping and composing songs of devotion.[33] More than 1,300 *bhajans* are attributed to her.

I am mad with love
And no one understands my plight.
Only the wounded
Understand the agonies of the wounded,
When the fire rages in the heart.
Only the jeweler knows the value of the jewel,
Not the one who lets it go.
In pain I wander from door to door,
But could not find a doctor.
Says Mira: Harken, my Master,
Mira's pain will subside
When Shyam comes as the doctor[34]

31 Srishti Nayak, *Challenging Gender and Sexuality Norms through Devotion: Bhakti and Sufi writings.*
32 https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/how-can-you-be-modest/
33 https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mira-Bai
34 https://www.best-poems.net/poem/i-am-mad-with-love-by-

The agency of women, rebellion and love also found its expression in the literary works of certain Sufi poets. *Shah jo Risalo*, is a collection of poetry by Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (d. 1752). In this seminal work, (based on 36 *surs*) Bhittai celebrates female characters from 'folklore' (British coinage), by paying tribute to their pain, valor, courage and struggle. For instance, he engages with the character of Sassui who was brought up in the house of a washer man whereas her beloved, Punhoon, belonged to an elite class of Kech, Balochistan. After they were married, Punhoon's family was not pleased with this match and sought to destroy it. One day Punhoon was kidnapped whilst Sassui was asleep. When she awoke to find him missing, Sassui immediately set out in search of her love, crossing mountains and deserts on foot.[35] Recognizing her pain, Bhittai speaks to her with love and advises her on how to overcome her challenge:

> The one you seek far away is always with you. Oh
> Helpless girl, says Latif, look for the beloved
> Within yourself. Search within for a sign of him,
> For his resting place is inside you.[36]

By counseling Sassui, in his exceptional spiritual treatise, Bhittai sends a very strong message that women are equally capable of striving for Divine Love. He guides Sassui by telling her that Punhoon is actually an emblem of *ishq e haqiqi* (Divine Love) and rather than traverse mountain and spring, all she needs to do is go within and find Him there. The meaning that Bhittai ascribes to her search is also instructive for orthodox sections of society who bar women's spiritual quests suggesting that seeking Divine Love is purely an androcentric pursuit.

In addition to treating gender as a fluid concept that can be embodied by any person regardless of their biology, Sufism is replete with examples of same-sex love and desire. Shaikh

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mirabai.html

35 https://www.tehqeeqat.org/downloadpdf/3234

36 Shah Abdul Latif, *Risalo*, ed. and trans. Christopher Shackle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

Hamid bin Fazlu'llah (d. 1536), popularly known as Jamali was a Persian Sufi poet and traveller who settled in Delhi at some point. There is not much known about him, but the biggest mystery is his relationship with Kamali, who is buried near him. There are many theories about the two: some say that Kamali was an ardent disciple, a fellow poet and a local villager, others insinuate a carnal relationship between the two. It is not certain why their names had a rhyme to it or why they were buried in the same tomb, although, typically, all *dargahs* (shrines) house the saint and disciple in close proximity to each other.[37]

There is no evidence whether Jamali and Kamali were lovers, but what matters is that they were buried together in death. This teaches us to think about desire and love in a different light. The male-male love that results in shared burial sites is attached to other notions too. According to a common Sufic understanding, Lover and the Beloved appear to be different when in fact they are not different.[38] Being buried together is also indicative of understanding death as union with the beloved.

Another example is that of Shah Hussain (d.1599) and his disciple Madho Lal in Lahore. The striking thing about them was that they transgressed all categories of difference being a same-sex, cross-caste, cross-religious and cross-generational duo. Shah Hussain was forty years older than Madho who was a Hindu Brahmin. They loved each other so deeply that Shah Husain changed his name to the composite Madho Lal Hussain, indicating one person. *Mela Chiraghan* (festival of light) or his Urs (union) is on the same date, celebrated every year with thousands of devotees paying homage to these symbols of love. Shah Hussain wrote prolific Punjabi poetry (*kafi*) about the pain of separation and yearning for union with the beloved, such as:[39]

37 Madhavi Menon, *Infinite Variety: A history of desire in India* (New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publishing, 2018).
38 Ibid.
39 https://sufipoetry.wordpress.com/2009/11/04/jhok-ranjhan/

Main bhi jhok ranjhan di janan,
Naal meray koi challey.

Travelers, I too have to go
To the place of my beloved,
Is there anyone who will go with me?

Pairan pawondi, mintan kardi,
Janan tan peya ikalay.

I have begged many to accompany me,
And now I set out alone.

Although the subcontinent had several external influences such as the Ghaznis, the Mughals, the early Syrian Christians, the Armenians, the Arabs, etc., what the British did to the fluidity of desire was to restrict it under moral mores.[40] In addition to introducing laws that were in line with Victorian morality and sensibilities, the British viewed transgender people or *Hijras*, who had been living in the region for thousands of years, as a threat to colonial authority. As is indicated in the account below:

> Misgendering feminine Hijras as men, colonial officials viewed Hijras as 'professional sodomites' who challenged the colonial legal system, which was based on heterosexual, reproductive sexuality and the family. In the colonial view, Hijras were an 'obscene' public nuisance that undermined the order of public space – a discourse that ignored the cultural significance of *Hijra badhai* (donations collected at births and weddings) and performance.[41]

The British colonial officers saw transgender people as 'kidnappers and castrators of children' and criminalized them in 1897, which started their subsequent persecution and non-acceptance, although both Islam and Hinduism accommodated transgender people. In Hinduism, references are made to third gender in the *Mahabharata* and the *Kama Sutra*. Whereas in Islam (Sufism), gender is understood as an identity form, which is fluid therefore, transgender people are also accepted as form embodying the Essence of God.

40 Ibid.

41 https://www.himalmag.com/long-history-criminalising-hijras-india-jessica-hinchy-2019/

Despite the legal and punitive measures that the British instituted in India which led to criminalizing and discriminatory practices, there were other elements too that curbed certain voices (this does not mean all voices were subdued) or indulged in self-censure. Intellectuals and writers had to find employment and the means to survive, since their cultural heritage was under constant attack, they produced 'cultured and civilized' content and anything deemed vulgar was stricken off.[42]

The more orthodox sections of Islam too condemned Sufi practices and even termed some as, 'without sharia' or unlawful, such as the Malamatia tradition or the *majzub*, peripatetic, ascetics. Going into these details or the different sectarian rifts in Islam is not within the purview of this discussion; I indulged in a transient reference to put across the point that in order to have a fair view of historical events, self-reflection is important.

Gat/Bhajan[43]: The Closing

Qawwali is derived from the Arabic word, *qaul* which means to speak – this is probably the most beautiful consequence of syncretism – the aesthetic fusion of Hindu and Sufic music. Based on the structure of various ragas, the Qawwali is a stunning repository of the Sufi literary tradition. This is how the verses of Sufi and Bhakti poets dripping of Divine Love, humaneness and harmony, are kept alive and find currency today through traditional qawwali or Coke Studio.

Listening to Qawwali induces a state of *sama* (listening) that is synonymous to the *rasa* effect I alluded to earlier in the essay. This is to say that *qaul* as well as the *sama* have the potential to induce a state of bliss, one that liberates the mind from the mazes of taxonomy and limitations, rather, the effect is to free up everything except the refrain of Divine Love – it is almost as if everything whirls around this one aspect – all the

42 Ruth Vanita, ed., *Queering India: same-sex love and eroticism in Indian culture and society* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

43 Final section of the raga.

rest, is just incidental and pales in comparison.

It encapsulates the Sufic view of the world and reality so aptly which suggests that all that is unwell in the world is due to its alienation from the divine source, which is why it is distorted. The main message of Sufism is an instruction for all to open up their eyes and see. To learn to see divinity in everything that stands before us. How one learns to see is '*tazkiyat-un nafs'* or purification of the soul.[44]

This essentially means to understand the self and to work on its transformation from an immature human being, who contends to take from the world, to one who matures to give unconditionally to the other. This also means that we work on fixing ourselves, rather than fixing the world, because the power to change is over the self, not so much the world and when the self is transformed, the other takes on that color too. It is no surprise then what is termed, as *Jihad-e Akbar* (the bigger jihad) is not wielding the sword at an external enemy, but the inner whisperings of the soul.

I am not insinuating that the sama or Qawwali is capable of doing all this, but that it certainly has the potential to transport one to a realm of divine encounter, a place where the violence of language and difference stops, and gives way to peace and non-judgment. It is this place that enables self-introspection and honesty.

In my view, Qawwali is the common *sur* that connects the present to the past and vice versa, it is a testimony to history, to love, to pluralism and to inclusion. And it is a metonym for love.

All night I have been in a state of sama, being immersed in soulful ragas and witnessing the unraveling within. Now, as the first morning light enters my living room, I decide to play one last piece, by a maestro, the 11th generation of Shaam Chauraasi Gharana; who perfected Khayaal singing.

Shafqat Ali Khan's rendition is mesmerizing, having inherited a deep mystical vocal quality from his father – his craft knows no boundaries of religion, caste

44 Chittick, *Sufism*.

or creed as he sings a Shabad by GuruNanak:[45]

koee bolai raam raam koee khudhaae
Some call the Lord 'Ram, Ram', and some 'Khuda'.

koee saevai guseeaa koee alaahi
Some serve Him as 'Gusain', others as 'Allah'.

kaaran karan kareem
He is the Cause of causes, and Generous.

kirapaa dhhaar reheem
He showers His Grace and Mercy upon us.

koee naavai theerathh koee haj jaae
Some pilgrims bathe at sacred shrines, others go on Hajj to Mecca.

koee karai poojaa koee sir nivaae
Some do devotional worship, whilst others bow their heads in prayer.

koee parrai baedh koee kathaeb
Some read the Vedas, and some the Koran.

koee oudtai neel koee supaedh
Some wear blue robes, and some wear white.

koee kehai thurak koee kehai hi(n)dhoo
Some call themselves Muslim, and some call themselves Hindu.

koee baashhai bhisath koee suragi(n)dhoo
Some yearn for paradise, and others long for heaven.

kahu naanak jin hukam pashhaathaa
Says Nanak, one who realizes the Hukam of God's Will,

prabh saahib kaa thin bhaedh jaathaa
knows the secrets of his Lord Master.

45 https://lyricsnusratsahib.blogspot.com/2018/03/koi-bole-ram-ram-koi-khudhaae-lyrics.html

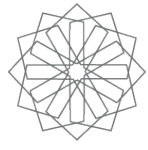
Music can be a metaphor for creation. It is as if the Composer pours His Creative Impulse into the empty stage of existence and a masterpiece containing all sensoria comes to be. The orchestra plays the score conducted by the genius taking the audience through the various emotional states till there is a slight lull and the soprano steps in with an aria to showcase the full measure of her virtuosity.

This self-contained piece is God's Oeuvre to His creation – the pinnacle of excellence hidden in us. Each one of us is like an aria in His Opera of Creation. Each one of us has the stage to do our bit, with love.

Love ensconces all things created. It doesn't matter what raga it is, the rasa is the same for all. The nectar of love, Prem rass, coats us all, equally.

Ek nukday wich gal mukdi aye.[46]
Everything absorbs in One dot.

46 Bulleh Shah



Discrimination and Exclusion in Educational System of Pakistan

Dr Naazir Mahmood

Education is a fundamental human right – a tool that enables us to make informed decisions, and contributes to our development in myriad ways. Across the world, the process of exclusion in education takes many forms and expressions. This essay probes into factors leading to educational exclusion with a particular reference to Pakistan. It further intends to provide a better understanding of factors contributing to educational exclusion in Pakistan so as to aid the creation of an educational system that is able to guarantee students' right to learn and succeed in educational institutes without being discriminated against.

The factors which impact access to education and lead to exclusion of our students include ethnicity, faith, gender, ideology, and socioeconomic status. The statistics on Pakistan's illiteracy serve to remind us that certain districts have a clear disadvantage in educational attainment, which

in turn leads to social exclusion. Being directly connected to social justice, education can and has played a detrimental role in spawning the seed of hyper-nationalism in the Pakistani youth.

The essay further examines the recent attempts by the federal government to enforce a single national curriculum (SNC) and how this is in contravention to the 18th Constitutional Amendment passed with consensus by the National Assembly in 2010. Lastly, the paper concludes with a caution that if the existing trends, including curbs on academia, continue unabated, Pakistan is likely to trudge through the third decade of the 21st century with severely stunted academic and intellectual growth. To counter this, all segments of civil society must come together to check the recent anti-progressive onslaught and restrictions that the state has imposed on the academia.

Inherent exclusion in education

To put it simply, exclusion is the practice of debarring a person or persons from being a part of any activity. School-age children (SAC) who are refused admission at the cost of religious, ethnic, or socio-economic differences are innocent victims of marginalisation, as are the academic and non-academic staff. Two sides of the same coin, discrimination and exclusion can manifest in several ways. For instance, adults, children, and youth belonging to minority communities in Pakistan are the recipients of faith-based prejudice whereas women are victims of ostracisation based merely on their gender. To quote an example of faith-based hate, a male student of grade nine in Government MC Model High School, Sheron Masih, was punched and thrashed to death by his classmates for drinking from a glass meant for Muslims in 2017.[1] Such incidents cannot be viewed in isolation – they are the outcome of years of hate-based indoctrination by the school system.

1 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/christian-teenager-beaten-to-death-pakistan-classmates-sharoon-masih-mc-moden-boys-government-school-a7936796.html

Then there is a consistent inability to achieve targets set in various education policies. For example, the National Education Policy 1998-2010 set a target of 85 per cent literacy for males and 55 per cent for females with a total of 70 per cent literacy to be achieved by 2010. Then, in the Education Policy 2009, the following policy action was mentioned: 'All children, boys and girls, shall be brought inside school by the year 2015.'[2] All remained unattainable for various reasons.

Interestingly, those at the helm of affairs fail to admit that their policies were off the mark and did not achieve what they should have done. Senior educationists keep praising themselves and their policies. Dr Wali Muhammad Zaki, the founder vice-chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University, writes in his autobiography:

> S. M. Sharif's period was a great success in education. His education policy of 1959 remained under successful implementation. Not only was the policy generally sound there was also significant economic growth taking place as well as relatively greater political stability in the country. No other period in Pakistan's history achieved comparable improvement and development in education. The credit goes to President Ayub Khan, who launched the programme of substantive and substantial educational reforms and development to support Sharif's policy.[3]

This shows an inherent bias in favour of dictatorial regimes in Pakistan. General Ayub Khan's 11-year rule was one of suppression and neglect of ethnic and linguistic aspirations of various nationalities in the country. There were repeated demonstrations and protests by students across the country against the one-unit scheme that had a detrimental impact on education in Pakistan but hardly any analysis of this aspect of educational history in the country is available. General Ayub's period was the era in which discrimination against and exclusion of various segments of society crystallised.

2 Pervez Aslam Shami, *Education in Pakistan: Policies and policy formulation* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2010), p. 48.

3 Wali Muhammad Zaki, *Educational Reminiscences* (Islamabad: Self-published, 1998), p. 62.

As a result, till 2015, the national baseline for education was just 60 per cent for boys and 53 per cent for girls with a total of just 57 per cent. The Pakistan Economic Survey 2018-19 set a target of 100 per cent literacy by 2030.[4]

Academic and ideological discrimination and exclusion

Educational institutions around the world implement 'academic dismissal policies'[5] – practicing academic expulsion to encourage academic success as a result of which students are required to achieve and maintain a good grade as specified by the institution. Failing that, students may be debarred from attending classes unless they improve their academic performance. Assessing the progress of a student up until the completion of their degree is a way of practicing exclusion – though many disagree and deem it necessary for a student to succeed.

In Pakistan – in addition to the above – ideological ostracisation works in several ways. Most significant of them is discrimination based on the diversity of thought. Since the state of Pakistan claims to drive its justification from the 'ideology of Pakistan', it may have multiple meanings and may manifest itself in multiple ways. This also has links with the Objectives Resolution that the First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan passed in March 1949. Over the decades, the ideology and the resolution collectively have become a basis for academic bias and hatred for students and the academia. To quote Sharif Al-Mujahid:

> '[In] Pakistan religion cannot be divorced from its national life. Here the ethical leaven to a democratic dispensation is provided by Islam because it alone can spell out the social significance of a democratic order in the Pakistani context.' [6]

4 *Pakistan Economic Survey 2018-19* (Islamabad: Finance Division, Government of Pakistan), p. 157.

5 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03075079.2019.1596076

6 Sharif Al-Mujahid, *Ideology of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Services Book Club, 2003), p. 9.

Similarly, the Objectives Resolution laid the foundation for an Islamic Republic and Islam became the state religion. Inquisitive discourse on the Objectives Resolution has become tantamount to asking for trouble. There have been numerous examples in which teachers such as Dr Ammar Ali Jan, Dr Pervaiz Hoodbhoy, and Junaid Hafeez have been accused of deviating from state-approved policies of not questioning such matters. This trend of intolerance has been on a constant rise in the country assuming different forms and shapes. A recent tweet by a TV host, Syed Iqrarul Hasan, on Pakistan's failures in the fields of science and technology landed him in a controversy earning him the label of 'traitor'. Even some professors of literature such as Razi Abedi sometimes become a victim of 'national ideology'. In his book, *Education Chaos*, he had the following to say:

> A good degree, with respectable published work, is a great distinction. But nobody in this country, unfortunately, bothers about the nature of work, some of which may be even inimical to our national ideology.'

Other forms of academic marginalisation include certain policies of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) regarding research papers; there is a rat race amongst the academia to publish one paper after another. Academics that harbour progressive ideals are more so likely to face threats and victimisation resulting in delayed promotions, rebukes from the higher administration and the HEC and in some cases dismissal from their jobs. A Persian PhD teacher was removed from a university in Islamabad on concocted charges; an assistant professor in English at the same university had to go on voluntary leave due to the unwelcoming atmosphere at the institution and an Urdu teacher at a college in Rawalpindi expressed similar concerns.

In the past two to three decades this has become more pronounced since the military rule of General Pervez Musharraf entrenching roots of authoritarianism in the academia which resulted in the posting of many higher officials of army as heads of various universities in the country. Academic freedom has declined; deans and

professors are discouraged from research that challenges a certain line of thinking and any deviation is equivalent to inviting discouragement or discrimination. As the suffocating atmosphere takes a foothold, insipid research doesn't allow for serious, fundamental questions to be asked regarding contradictions in Pakistani society.

There is general lack of attention to the study of social sciences resulting in an overall pathetic situation of critical thinking and analysis about social issues in the country. This state of affairs is not something hidden from the eyes of academic circles in Pakistan. In 2011, in the First International Conference for the Promotion of Social Science Research at the University of Gujrat, the following was observed:

> A general lack of interest in the social sciences in Pakistan, as evident from the publication of dismally low number of research papers in internationally reputed journals, prevents academics from pursuing even those research projects that could bring funding to their universities. The people of Pakistan have paid dearly for the neglect of social science research with its cumulative impact being felt in terms of the declining quality of state apparatus. Without a vibrant, rational tradition in social science research, the theoretical perspectives and empirical research on which sound policymaking ought to rest remain woefully inadequate.[7]

Discrimination and exclusion based on ethnicity

Pakistan is a linguistically heterogeneous country, home to inter alia the Baloch, Brahui, Punjabi, Pakhtuns, Saraiki, Sindhi, Muhajir and other communities. Post-1947, when Muhajirs, from different regions of India, migrated to Pakistan, they adopted Urdu as their lingua franca, thereby identifying themselves as Urdu-speaking Muhajirs. Ethnic tensions

7 Proceedings of 1st International Conference on Promotion of Social Science Research in Pakistani Universities: Prospects and Challenges, 18-20 April 2011 (Gujrat: University of Gujrat, 2012), p. 1.

followed when Karachi became the capital of Pakistan; a move that disheartened Sindhis and parted the city from its province. The 1950s saw a period of conflicts as a result of the government order which required the University of Sindh to be moved to Hyderabad. Tensions between various ethnic groups also surfaced in educational institutions of the city, which sometimes in result in clashes.

An overriding fear of the other preordained strained relations. The formation of 'one-unit' and the dissolution of provinces in West Pakistan had their own consequences with a large number of Punjabis and Pakhtuns settling in Karachi. Apprehensive Sindhis saw their educational opportunities suddenly decline. A chain reaction in the 1960s and 1970s trailed the migration of non-Sindhis into Sindh; Sindhis and other ethnic groups were at loggerheads. A quota system, now widely entrenched in the province, was introduced by the Government of Sindh based on rural and urban domiciles – Muhajirs understandably were the first to protest. Sindhis, on the other hand, thought it a step in the right direction, favouring students belonging from relatively backward regions. The formation of All Pakistan Muhajir Students Association (APMSO) in 1979 and Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) in 1984 further intensified relations between other ethnic factions. The Baloch, Pakhtuns, Punjabis and Saraikis were amongst those that felt in constant danger and ethnic violence in universities became rampant during the 1980s. Students avoided going to 'no-go areas' – the situation has only marginally improved in the 21st century, and bitter memories still haunt these campuses.

In comparison, non-Punjabi students in Punjab – particularly from the Baloch, Sindhi and Saraiki communities – feel unwelcome because of their ethnicity. However, violence against non-Punjabis appears to be insignificant in the province. A plausible explanation for this can be the reasonably small number of multi-ethnic students in Punjabi universities and the Punjabi urban population having adopted Urdu as their first language, irrespective of a separate mother tongue.

Marginalisation based on ethnicity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is limited to Hindko-speaking students and teachers in Pakhtun-majority areas, and Pashto-speaking students and teachers in Hindko-majority areas.[8] With the establishment of new campuses and universities in several districts of KP – such as Chitral, DI Khan, Haripur, Kohat, Mardan, and Swat – the ethnic composition of students and teachers has gradually become uniform, with one ethnic group of that area dominating. There are other ethnic groups too such as Dardic/Kohistani in Kohistan, Shangla, and Swat who complain about the hegemony of the Pakhtuns in their areas.

The same we can say about Gujjari-speaking communities who have a power base in Mansehra but face discrimination in Kohistan. Educational institutions in heavily populated Baloch and Pakhtun areas of Balochistan have their own people in an overwhelming majority, regardless of a district quota system in place. The University of Balochistan in Quetta hosts mainly Pakhtuns – limiting the prospects for Baloch students and triggering in them a lack of self-worth based on their identity.[9]

The students of the Shia Hazara community, which has been a victim of wide-spread brutality and violence, have been forced to confine themselves to seemingly safer localities in Quetta. Increasing numbers of abductions has also left many Baloch youth feeling intimidated in their varsities.[10] As the HRCP Fact-Finding Mission Report 2019 noted:

> The Hazara community at large, and their youth in particular, have become increasingly prone to mental health problems and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the fear that surrounds their community and their ghettoisation in the name of security.[11]

8 Based on interview with Dr Sarfraz Khan, former director of Area Study Centre for Central Asia, University of Peshawar

9 Based on interview with Dr Amir Bakhsh from Turbat and with some students during a personal visit to Balochistan University in Quetta

10 HRCP, *Balochistan: Neglected Still – An HRCP fact-finding report* (Lahore: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019).

11 Ibid., p. 9.

Faith-based discrimination and exclusion

About 95 per cent of Pakistan's population is Muslim with the remaining people belonging to smaller religious groups. Receiving a standard of education at par with their Muslim counterparts for minorities is a wish unattainable. This starts from the school level and owes largely to the bias that the state of Pakistan itself has against certain religious groups. In June 2020, the Punjab government made the teaching of Holy Quran with translation mandatory for all university students. According to the notification from the Punjab Governor's Secretariat, a student would not be awarded a degree if he or she does not study the Holy Quran with translation. Although the non-Muslim students have been exempted from this requirement, putting in place such a measure serves to alienate the individuals belonging to religious minorities at the educational institutes. The move is eerily similar with that of the Narendra Modi-led Hindu-centrist government in India, which is dedicated to putting Hinduism at the heart of the national education system by omitting historical chapters on the subcontinent's Islamic rulers from school textbooks.

In Pakistan, the overt tilt towards faith was manifest from the beginning when the First Constituent Assembly passed the Objectives Resolution in March 1949. This was in continuation with a long-standing tradition of many Muslim historians over the centuries who projected non-Muslims as infidels. As Dr Mubarak Ali in his Urdu essay *Mazhab aur Siyasi Zaban* (Religion and Political Language) points out, Muslim historians such as Fakhar Mudabbir, Ziaudin Barani, and Ali bin Shihab Hamadani urged Muslim rulers to wage crusades against all non-Muslims in India and treat Hindus as lesser subjects.[12]

Since the inclusion of this resolution into the constitution, a mindset has emerged that considers discussions on any religion other than Islam a sign of disrespect to the Muslim faith. The non-Muslim communities living in this country often raise their voice for being discriminated against, however this

12 Mubarak Ali, "Mazhab aur Siyasi Zaban," *Tareekh* 26 (2005).

resolution forbids them from achieving any high-level seat in key institutions of the country. It has gradually become a legal instrument to curb academic debate on issues that are becoming fatally harmful to the nation.

In Pakistan many right-wing, traditionalist scholars have been adamant to push the education system in Pakistan to the far right with a clear aim to promote the state religion through education. The Islamic theory of education that became a guiding principle for all education policies in the country was overwhelmingly biased against other religions. An essay by Syed Ashraf Ali, titled *Islamic Theory of Education*, stresses the same.[13] All education policies in Pakistan usually begin with an assertion that education should serve as a tool to inculcate Islamic principles and values among pupils and students. The concept of Hermeneutics of Citizenship by Atalia Omer applies here because it is built on the underlying assumption that the true citizen of a country is the one who belongs to the religious majority. In official curricula in Pakistan, the idealised and authorised Pakistani citizen is assumed to be the Sunni Muslim, while other ways of being Muslim are silenced. The Shia movement against textbooks in Northern Areas, known also as the textbook controversy, challenged this silence, raising fundamental issues pertaining to religion, nation, and citizenship in Pakistan: who is a Pakistani, or should be, what a true Muslim is, or should be, and how religious communities struggle to redefine the very terms of national citizenship.[14]

Writers such as A. H. Nayyar, Tariq Rahman, and Rubina Saigol have highlighted through their writings this inherent trend in the entire education system of Pakistan. Jaffar Ahmed also has been writing on religious extremism and intolerance being promoted in Pakistan Studies textbooks prepared and prescribed by the textbook boards in the country. Furthermore, Mutahir Ahmed in his paper points out:

13 S. A. Ashraf, "Islamic Theory of Education," in *Dr Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi Memorial Volume II*, ed. Hilal Ahmad Zubairi (Karachi: Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi Academy, 1994).

14 https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/1172

> The state made a strategic choice to champion the cause of Islam in order to shore up its authority and legitimacy, outmanoeuvre its opposition and gain stability…The state proved willing to give up secular ideology by Islamising the public sphere, it brought Islam into the public arena and established a massive control over its flow in society and politics.[15]

Since the late 1970s, there has been a proliferation in pious content in Pakistan's curriculum and textbooks. An air of religious superiority has been indoctrinated in students and teachers alike, resulting in millions of youth and adults viewing other faiths as contemptible and unworthy. A bias is noticeable against those who do not practice the dominant religion or belong to a dominant sect. A comparison can be drawn with the education system in Turkey and how under the rule of Justice and Development Party, the AKP, the system has seen an expansion of religious study at the expense of other areas of the curriculum. In 2017, AKP made changes to the national curriculum, which doubled religious teaching in high schools to two hours each week and omitted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution from science classes.[16] Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has, time and again, stressed on the creation of a 'pious generation', and presented a strong education system as a prerequisite for a secure national future. By doing so, he has tapped into the sentiments of the country's conservative groups and aimed to reshape the Turkish identity into a purely Islamic one. This construction of a new Muslim civilisation has little space for liberal ideas and influences.

In Pakistan, the inherent bias against non-Muslims such as Ahmadis, Hindus, and Christians excludes them from educational and professional opportunities. Ahmadis appear to be the worst targeted as the constitutional bent against them

15 Mutahir Ahmed, "The State, Ideology and the Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan" *Pakistan Perspective* 21, no. 2 (2016): 210

16 https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2019/0827/What-debate-over-modern-education-tells-us-about-a-divided-Turkey

legitimises the constant attacks on the community members and nobody is able to challenge this dominant narrative of hate. The lives of Ahmadi students and teachers – if there are any who can openly profess to being Ahmadis – are under a constant threat. The blasphemy law has been central in promoting cultural and structural violence against the non-Muslims and the dissenting Muslims. The law that penalises any act that is insulting towards Islam with a death sentence has been used, and misused, since it was promulgated in 1986.

Besides Ahmadis, Hindu students are at great risk. History textbooks describe Hindus as evil who are bent upon subverting the struggle for Pakistan. Expressions such as 'Hindu Banya' (trader) and 'Hindu Zehniyat' (mentality) are thrown around by students in schools, colleges and universities. In Pakistan, the only true identity is seen as the Sunni Muslim one. This framing of national boundaries in terms of religion gives rise to a language of purity, which makes the religious minorities feel unwanted.

As a result, the literacy rate in Hindus is dismally low. Hindu children often feel compelled to quit their education due to persistent bullying and taunts of being *Kafirs* (infidels) from their Muslim peers. Although the constitution has made it mandatory that non-Muslims be provided facilities to learn about their own faith, this remains largely unimplemented. Consequently, non-Muslim students are made to study Islamic Studies and pass exams of oral recitation in Arabic. To quote the 'Madrassah Mindset', a study by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) conducted in 2018:

> Despite studying same content, students cannot escape sectarian thinking. Even though they read same news, for in-depth analysis, they rely on scholars of their sects, who they also idealise. Their political views too are sectarian-tilted, though there are some regional variations for some of the larger sects.[17]

17 PIPS, *After Study Hours: Exploring the Madrassah Mindset* (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, 2018).

This has resulted in marginalisation of Ahmadis, Hindus and Christians in Pakistan, though Christians enjoy a slightly better status in Muslim eyes as they belong to one of the three Abrahamic religions. This treatment against non-Muslims is rampant as a research by IDRAC and HRCP concluded in 2019[18]. The research found that discrimination in all respects against non-Muslims students is miserable. Seventy per cent of teachers that belong to minority faiths are a victim of severe exclusion and 72 per cent non-Muslim parents reported their children being ill-treated in schools and colleges alike. An absence of critical thinking lessons has led to a dearth of objective enquiry – particularly in history and Pakistan Studies textbooks. On a visit to Tharparkar in Sindh, in the early months of 2020, I was able to do a quick field survey and found that Ethics textbooks were not available in bookshops, irrespective of being in an area where there was a sizeable Hindu population.

A rather brutal example of faith-based hatred is the murder of Mashal Khan in Mardan, a bright, young student of Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan who was wrongly accused and lynched by a mob of students for supposedly posting blasphemous content on social media. In a research report titled 'Education: A Pathway to Convergence', A. H. Nayyar and Riaz Sheikh have explained the biases in Pakistani education policies and textbooks.[19] An ideological intoxication – or rather poisoning – of education has sown the seeds of hyper-nationalism in the country. Recent attempts by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government to introduce the SNC goes against the spirit of the 18th Amendment that gave autonomy to provinces regarding educational decisions and matters.

18 Amjad Nazeer, *Education and Inequality: Discerning the Foundation of Citizenry* (Islamabad: HRCP/IDRAC, 2019).

19 NCJP, *Education: A Pathway to Convergence* (Lahore: National Commission for Justice and Peace, 2019).

Gender-based discrimination and exclusion

While this entails a preferential treatment to one gender, it may or may not be at the cost of another gender. Looking at the ratio of girls in a majority of higher educational institutions in Pakistan, one may incorrectly assume that girls have better educational opportunities in Pakistan. However, this assumption does not reflect the reality, and one needs to look at the broader picture to fully comprehend how gender discrepancies exist in Pakistan's educational sector.

The patriarchal values embedded in Pakistani society are mirrored in schools and universities when the preferential opportunities that boys enjoy at homes extend to educational institutions. Education is supposed to help with the advancement of women, yet in Pakistan it promotes gender stereotypes through curriculum and textbooks and the manner in which administration – including non-teaching and teaching staff – treats boys and girls. Administration and teachers at educational institutions convey to girls – both covertly and overtly – that they must behave more cautiously while on campus, often imposing a certain dress code on them in the name of culture or religion.

In 2013, a few female students of National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) in Islamabad were fined for not wearing a *dupatta* which stirred a debate on social media about the moral policing of women on campuses. In 2018, a faculty member at the Institute of Business Management (IoBM) shared her experience of being policed for her attire by a security official at the campus gates. Those who try to challenge such subordination are not welcome and face intimidation and threats, as has been the case in the staging of Aurat Marches across the country.

Many universities in Pakistan now have introduced certain dress codes that are also available on their websites. Capital University of Science and Technology (CUST) does not allow the following for its female students: T-shirts

with jeans, sleeveless shirts, skintight dresses, and flashy jewellery.[20] Similarly, Bahria University in Islamabad makes it compulsory for all female students to wear dupatta or scarf with all dresses, and also recommends veils such as *abaya*, *chador* and *hijab*.[21] Hazara University in Mansehra, KP, also issued an order in January 2021 banning jeans and T-shirts.[22] The same happened in Bacha Khan University, Charsadda.[23] Hamdard University allows only black and white *shalwar qameez* and clearly prohibits colourful dresses for girl students on campus.[24]

Educationists and scholars have conducted numerous research studies with a gender lens in Pakistan. Hazirullah, in his study 'Ideologies and Power in the Textbooks', investigated and proved that textbook writers invest their books with ideologies to serve the interest of the dominant groups mainly representing elites and men. He identifies ideology, power and subjectivity as the main drivers of discrimination and exclusion of girls and women in education. He rightly points out:

> Far from establishing and developing egalitarian and just society, school knowledge (textbook) in Pakistan has been organised to maintain the status quo: reproduce gender hierarchies in the public and private sphere and sustain hegemonic masculinity on social scale; normalise social class inequalities by teaching working-class children conformity to social, cultural, and occupational hierarchies.[25]

Before girls reach a school-going age, their parents make a decision to not enrol them at all. Chronic poverty is one of the main drivers for such decisions whereas the middle and

20 https://cust.edu.pk/my-capital/allpolicy/university-dress-code/
21 https://www.bahria.edu.pk/oncampus/dress-code/
22 https://www.zenger.news/2021/01/12/no-jeans-no-makeup-pakistani-universitys-new-dress-code-ripped-by-critics/
23 https://tribune.com.pk/story/2285354/k-p-universities-ban-fitted-jeans-impose-dress-codes
24 https://www.hamdard.edu.pk/dress-code-fol/
25 Hazir Ullah, *Ideologies and Power in the Textbooks* (Islamabad: IRD-IIU, 2018), p. 14.

upper-class population prefer educating all their children. Community customs and traditions also play a role here. This is substantiated by lower literacy ratios for women across the country. In every province in Pakistan, female literacy rate and gender parity index (GPI) show that girls and women are at a perpetual disadvantage. According to UNESCO data for Pakistan, gross enrolment rate (GER) in 2019 at secondary level was just 40 per cent for girls and 46 per cent for boys. While at tertiary level, GER is just nine per cent for girls and 10 per cent for boys.[26]

Boys drop out in their teens mainly to look for work while girls drop out due to poverty and a lack of functioning toilets at government schools. In the 1970s, separate and all-female colleges and universities for girls and boys resulted in female subordination and male super-ordination. Losing contact with the opposite sex sparks curiosity and perpetuates gender-specific roles (as imposed by the older generations; teachers and academia in universities). There is an assuming superiority complex engrained in the minds of boys from a young age where they see themselves as the better or stronger sex and girls as the weaker one of the two.

In contrast, western societies where coeducation is widely adopted (although there do exist all-girls schools and colleges), gender-based discrimination at a school level is not as prevalent. Besides all-girls schools and colleges in Pakistan, women teachers teach in isolation from men and attend segregated teacher training colleges. As result of which, women have self-esteem issues and are unable to confidently pursue their passions for fear of being in a male dominated work environment. As Ayesha Bashiruddin in her narrative, titled *Becoming a Teacher Educator: A female perspective*, mentions:

> At every social gathering, my female friends and acquaintances constantly asked when I would get married. They felt that as a woman, my professional life had no value. A woman's life comprised a husband, home and children. This they thought, was the true identity of a woman: to be

26 http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/pk

> known either by her father's name or her husband's name, she had no right to be recognised in her own right as a human being, an individual.[27]

Harassment of female students and women teachers in Pakistani educational institutions at the hands of male lecturers and professors is another tragic reality. Cases of harassment in schools and colleges continue to surface on social media with one recent example of a girl from Gomal University in DI Khan who successfully managed to record the dean pleading her for sexual favours. The outcry to the video on social media resulted in the dean losing his job. Rampant cases of harassment in coeducation institutions have driven parents to disallow their daughters from attending college or university which further aggravates gender-based plight in Pakistan.

Exclusion based on socio-economic status

The Economic Survey of Pakistan and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), and other numerous studies by independent researchers, have highlighted socio-economic conditions of the Pakistani populace as a primary cause for education exclusion. A poverty rate that hovers between 30-40 per cent continues to prevent the poor from sending their children to school. Of course, there are other causes of discrimination and exclusion, but socio-economic issues are one of the primary causes.

Poor economic conditions force children to get involved in child labour. According to one study, the children's contribution to work in rural areas is about eight times greater than in urban areas. Rural children are mostly engaged in the agriculture sector (74 per cent) whereas in urban areas,

27 Ayesha Bashiruddin, "Becoming a Teacher Educator: A female perspective," in *Gender & Education in Pakistan*, ed. Rashida Qureshi and Jane FA Rareiya (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

most working children (31 per cent) are engaged in the manufacturing sector. In non-agricultural sectors, 93 per cent of working children are engaged in a wide variety of informal sectors.[28]

A research report prepared by Asim Bashir Khan and published by Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) in 2020 had the following to say: 'Currently 22.8 million children aged 5-16 years in Pakistan are out of school. This figure represents 44 per cent of the total population in this age group and amounts to the second largest population of out-of-school children in the world.'[29] This is hardly a new phenomenon; Mazhar Arif had stressed the situation in a 2008 position paper:

> Only 57 per cent of boys and 44 per cent of girls are enrolled at the primary school level. The dropout rate during the first five years of primary school is around 70 per cent. At the secondary level, 46 per cent of boys are enrolled in school and only 32 per cent girls. Illiteracy is extremely high, particularly among girls it reaches 72 per cent. Among males, illiteracy is 43 per cent.[30]

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, government-run schools and low-fee private schools had little choice but to close their doors. Online classes were an unachievable goal; students lacked the finances to purchase laptops/computers and schools had meagre resources to pay their staff. As poverty rose and inflation skyrocketed, people belonging to the lower socioeconomic strata had to drop their children out of schools. The year 2020 has been called the worst year for education around the globe. Around 40 per cent of the Pakistani population dwells in poverty and food insecurity. A report by Nazish Brohi in August 2020 states that Pakistan has

28 M. Zakria and R. Zakar, *Rapid Assessment on Children Involved in the Worst Forms of Child Labour in District Muzaffargarh*.

29 Asim Bashir Khan, *Bringing all the Girls to School: A case for more investment* (Islamabad: Pakistan Coalition for Education, 2020), p. 6.

30 Mazhar Arif, *Privatization of Education in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Pakistan Coalition for Education, 2008), p. 2.

recorded its first economic contraction since 1952.[31]

Though successive governments in Pakistan have been promising a turnaround in education status for the country with one education policy after another, no education policy has been able to deliver what it promised. In 74 years, Pakistan has seen seven education policies and numerous commissioned reports and white papers. Education policies fail to meet their term and no evaluations are conducted on what prevented it from delivering its promises, and the cycle continues. To ensure universal primary education, all students must get an opportunity to enrol in schools and complete at least five years of education.

Less than four per cent of the GDP is dedicated to education spending; a quick comparison with Muslim countries shows that Pakistan is behind Afghanistan which spends 4.1 per cent of its GDP on education. Algeria spends 4.3 per cent, and Egypt, Indonesia, Iran and Iraq nearly the same. Among the SAARC countries, Bhutan spends seven per cent and India spent almost four per cent in 2018. Countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya spend five and 5.5 per cent respectively. Two major causes for educational inequality on the basis of socioeconomic status in Pakistan are high poverty and minuscule government spending on education.

On the Human Development Index, Pakistan has perched itself lower than the 150th rank in the world. The same applies to exclusion in tertiary and higher education. The enrolment rate in higher education in Pakistan is just nine per cent. Out of 100 young boys and girls, 91 are unable to enrol at an institute of higher education.

This is the result of a foreign policy that has been unable to forge friendly relations with neighbouring countries. Afghanistan, India, and Iran – with whom Pakistan shares thousands of kilometres-long borders – do not look at Pakistan as a dependable friend. Strained relations with

31 Nazish Brohi, *Changed by a Virus?: The medium and long-range impact of the corona crisis on Pakistan* (Islamabad: FES, 2020), p. 23.

neighbours have forced Pakistan to spend disproportionate amounts on defence and measures such as erecting fences on borders. The resources that could and should have been used to eliminate or at least reduce educational injustice in the country are being spent on arms, ammunition, bombs, and missiles, all contributing to an ever-enhancing sense of insecurity and a perpetual threat.

With declining standards of education at government schools, a majority of parents feel hard-pressed to send their children to private institutes. A multi-tier categorisation of private schools has emerged in the country, with private schools that charge from as low as Rs 500 per month to as high as a Rs 100,000 a month. The Cambridge O' and A' level education system – mainly a feature of top-notch private schools – is out of reach for low-income groups and has further accelerated the process of educational exclusion by dismissing those who cannot pay high fees. This is intensifying the class-based structure of education.

The stratified education system was first established by the British administration in which schools staffed by British teachers and serving elite Indian families aimed to create a class of people able to serve in government positions. Over seven decades after the British withdrew from the region, much of this system remains in present-day India and Pakistan in terms of the textbook and examination driven nature of education, the ongoing struggle between English and local languages as mediums of instruction in schooling, and the greater status and opportunity available to those who are fluent in English and familiar with Western ways.[32]

Conclusion

This essay has highlighted ways in which Pakistani students face marginalisation and endure exclusion. With gender hierarchies, faith-based discrimination, and class stratification being reinforced by the country's educational system, the very

32 https://sadafshallwani.net/2014/03/27/education-in-pakistan-part4/

system has become an embodiment of inequality. To reduce these disparities and address discrimination and exclusion more effectively, the government must review the existing policies in place and identify the gaps and challenges.

Essentially, a fundamental alteration in state policies can make a difference. This change must focus on at least two areas. First is the financial dimension in which more allocation to education can improve the infrastructure of government schools, and enhance access and quality of education for those who are discriminated against and end up excluded from mainstream education. Secondly, an overall shift from the current illiberal education to a more enlightened, liberal, and progressive education. With the existing stress on too much religiosity from the lowest to the highest tiers of education, children and youth are exposed to an intolerant worldview.

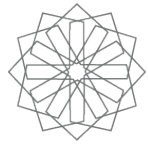
Such a narrow worldview makes them susceptible to biased approaches towards other religious and sectarian groups. A perpetual state of tension with neighbouring countries has inculcated a paranoia among the youth which fosters a jingoistic mindset towards the 'others', especially if they belong to other religions. This tendency can change in the long run only if the Pakistani state is able to nurture friendly relations with other countries and our history books present a more tolerant view of our neighbours. Without such fundamental shifts, discrimination and exclusion are likely to continue.

An overall reduction in poverty enables more parents to send their children to schools and allows them to at least complete their school education. And for poverty reduction, once again we need some structural shift in policies from a security state to a development and welfare-orientated state.

The SNC introduced by the present government, with the aim to reduce disparities in education, needs to be critically appraised to see whether it is actually achieving that goal or the contrary. The SNC entailing a greater dose of religious material might prove counterintuitive to the goal of reducing

faith-based exclusion. There must be a complete elimination of gender-biased content in school textbooks as such content preserves gender hierarchies and breeds misogyny in youth.

Further actions to address barriers to education such as reduction in tuition fees, introduction of teacher training programmes to respond to diverse learning needs, recruitment of teachers from diverse ethnic and religious groups, scholarships for children from poor families, an inclusive curriculum, and water and sanitation facilities in rural schools are all ways to make education more inclusive in Pakistan. An uphill task indeed, education reform should be the primary responsibility of all concerned, but essentially it the state's responsibility to make sure that discrimination and exclusion is eliminated or at least substantially reduced.



Religion and Statecraft in a Muslim Society

Zahida Hina

It was 7th century AD when the storm of dust and sparks, surging from the hoofs of galloping horses of militia from the Arabian Peninsula, took into its folds the Persian Kingdom, the Roman Empire, and idyllic India. Thus, reigns of the followers of Zarathustra, Jesus Christ, and Moses ended. After the Rashidun Caliphate, which reigned following the demise of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), various regimes emerged. Of them, the Ummayads earned infamy by martyring Hussain (AS), the Prophet's grandson. All this happened because the eminent, as well as the mediocre, religious scholars of varying schools of thought became followers of the monarchs. These religious scholars were provided with colossal estates to operate their seminaries. Caliphs, kings, and monarchs turned these scholars into their henchmen by bestowing them with precious rewards and lucrative emoluments. The way churches and monarchs were safeguarding each other's interests in Europe, the royal courts in Muslim countries were the institutions where scholars' religious interpretations and rulings provided basis for the tyrannical decrees of monarchs.

The scholars who tried to console the suffering masses were deemed by monarchs as thorns in their sides. The false scholars (*Ulema-e-soo*, as they are called today), just to have greater influence and grandeur, provided the monarch's court with religious rulings aimed at suppressing the masses, the people-friendly scholars, the enlightened ones, and the mystics. The brutally whipped backs of Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Hanbal, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Malik remind us of the monarchs' insatiable hunger for power and tyrannical rule. This disposition obstructed the way of liberal, enlightened, and scientific thought for one-and-a-half millennium. The ruling class availed every opportunity to usurp the rights of Muslim masses. Several saints, using the veil of mysticism, tried to find a way detached from the course of monarch-sponsored scholars, but most had to sacrifice their lives in this pursuit and were branded apostates and non-believers. Ibn Mansoor Hallaj's execution on the orders of the caliph is a case in point. He was tortured and his feet and hands were cut off before he was either beheaded or hanged to death on the gallows.

The library of Imam Ibn Hazm was set ablaze and all his books were set on fire. A few hundred years later, Imam Ibn Taymiyyah was imprisoned as many as six times. The chief jurist of Cordoba in Spain, Ibn Rushd, whose family served at this position for five generations, was declared an apostate for disagreeing with the caliph on a scholarly issue. He was removed from his post and assigned to clean the shoes of worshippers at the Cordoba mosque stairs. The mosque-goers were ordered to spit on him while entering the mosque and on their exit. As if this was not enough, his books were set ablaze in the town square. Within fifty years of his death, however, some of Ibn Rushd's major works were translated in Hebrew and Latin, paving way to the renaissance movement in Europe.

Successive invasions of Mehmood Ghaznavi kept ravaging Hindustan. The seventeenth invasion resulted in the demolition of Somanath's Jyotirlinga statute. After that, the Khiljis, Ghouris, and Lodhis ruled Hindustan. The Mughals

came in the end, but they were not plunderers, rather they assimilated well. The story of their decline, the spread of the British Empire, and the freedom movement at the start of the 20th century is all part of history. The war of independence by inhabitants of the subcontinent resulted in the partition of India and thus Pakistan came into being.

After the descent of the Mughal Empire, there were a few instances of conflict between Hindus and Muslims during the 18th and 19th centuries, but there was never widespread confrontation across the country. Muslims ruled Hindustan for centuries and it was not unusual to have differences in a culturally diverse society. These differences had racial, linguistic, regional, and class conflict tones, but they never evolved into organised religious militancy and terrorism. The British, after colonising India, divided its people politically using the religious card as the British perception of the world was based on religious segmentation. To them, Europe was Christian, Hindustan was Hindu, the Middle East was Muslim and the Far East Buddhist. Owing to this belief, and as a political strategy, they started segregating people on religious grounds. In 1865, a census was conducted in the northwestern provinces which enumerated people on the basis of caste, religion, and profession. Later in 1872, under British rule, a census of the entire India was conducted.

The British were intimidated by the war of independence in 1857 as both Hindus and Muslims had united against them. They realised the importance of breaking this unity to prolong their rule in India. To divide people, the British propagated the idea that Hindus and Muslims dwelling in India were two separate nations. To this end, they deliberately introduced separate electorates so that Muslims would vote for Muslim candidates and Hindus for Hindu candidates. Following this strategy, a political divide emerged in India based on religion, the negative implications of which started damaging the fabric of the age-old multicultural society there.

This religious divide grew more complex and perilous over time. In 1882, Hindu-Muslim riots took place in Tamil Nadu.

Some forty years later, Malabar (1920-21), Bihar and Bengal (1921-22), and Kohat (1924) witnessed severe Hindu-Muslim clashes. Later on, religious contention intensified immensely. Between April 1924 and March 1925, as many as 11 cities of India experienced such riots, while between April 1925 and March 1926, Bengal, UP, CP, Bombay, Berar, Gujarat, and Sholapur witnessed the same. Each successive year brought more intensity and frequency to the infighting. From 1927 to 1939, hundreds of Hindu-Muslim riots occurred in every part of the country. These included the November 1939 riots in Sukkur which resulted in high casualties. Later Calcutta and Noakhali also witnessed communal riots in 1946.

To give this religious divide a political and electoral dimension, the British Parliament passed the Indian Councils Act 1909, in which the right to franchise was granted to certain sections of society, rather than the entire adult population. Those who had the privilege to vote included people belonging to the feudal class, capitalists, and certain selected professions. According to the Act, the legislative council seats were allocated on religious basis as a separate electorate. Hence the seeds of religious discord were sown in the electoral process. Later, the Government of India Act 1919 was enacted, which was somewhat better than the 1909 law, however, in the new Act, the ambit of the previous law was expanded by introducing separate electorates for Sikhs as well. The right to franchise remained limited in the 1919 Act to property-owners, wealthy landlords, income or municipal taxpayers, and people belonging to certain other occupations.

When the insistence for 'one-person, one vote' grew intense, the Government of India Act 1935 was enacted. This Act, however, denied the common people their right to vote by maintaining a limited right to franchise. However, representations in federal and provincial assemblies were further increased. The Muslim League could not muster substantial support from Muslim voters in the 1937 elections. While the Congress experienced considerable success, the League could win only 109 out of 482 Muslim seats. The British, till then, had not resolutely decided about the

partition of India. However, before the elections of 1945-46, the partition seemed evident and it was certain that India was to be divided on religious grounds. This was when Britain's enforced separate electorate played a key role in achieving its objective. The federal assembly elections were held on a total of 102 seats out of which Congress, Muslim League, and Akali Dal secured 59, 30, and two seats, respectively. In provincial elections, Muslim League secured 87 per cent of the Muslim seats. These elections proved that it enjoyed the support of a majority of Muslims. The party, however, won only in Muslim constituencies. Thus, it effectively came out of mainstream politics to become a communal party. The political divide, the seeds of which were sown on religious grounds, was about to bear fruit.

British India was partitioned on the basis of religion and Pakistan came into existence. After partition, more than a million people were killed in Hindu-Muslim riots and over 17.5 million were rendered homeless. Besides, property worth billions of rupees was destroyed. Partition was visible, but another unseen division had also taken place. Millions of families were devastated. The geography changed, the history got misquoted and misinterpreted, traditions that were intact for centuries, fell apart.

Pakistan came into existence; it could not, however, emerge as a modern nation-state. Why could society not stabilise after separating from the Hindu majority? Why did religious extremism and sectarian strife immerse into society? Which facts were denied earlier but proved correct later? Pakistan will be unable to get over the severe political, social and economic crises which are getting acute with each passing day unless we analyse these questions objectively and rationally.

Pakistan could not emerge as a nation-state for several reasons. The first and foremost was that its creation was based on religious nationalism, rather than a modern nation-state perspective. The founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah's take was that Hindus and Muslims were two nations dwelling in India,

which were distinct not only in religious terms but also in historic, cultural, and social contexts. He was not struggling for the independence of India; he was of the view that India should be bifurcated. Pakistan should comprise the Muslim majority provinces, whereas Hindu majority provinces should constitute India. Contrary to that, Congress was demanding no discrimination among the inhabitants of India and was considering all of them as Indians. Before the start of World War II, Britain had no intentions to leave India. Although it emerged victorious in World War II, it had to pay a heavy price for the victory. It was so financially insolvent that it took short- and long- term loans from the United States. It was also compelled to set its colonies free and decided to withdraw from India as well. Britain was very apprehensive of the communist Soviet Union that emerged even stronger after the war. Indian National Congress, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, was influenced by socialist ideas and had an ideological tilt towards the Soviet Union, and therefore, Britain did not want to leave India as a one unit to prevent it becoming an ally of the Soviet Union. As for the British, they were wary that leaving India united, the whole region, including South Asia, would resultantly break away from the political and economic dominance of the West. Hence, Britain decided to divide India on religious grounds and created Pakistan. The newly-created Pakistan lacked industrial and economic resources. For its economic and territorial survival, dependence on the West, particularly the US and its allies, which were emerging as a new power bloc, was inevitable. Founded in the name of Islam, it was an anti-communist ideological state. Jinnah had reflected his thoughts against communism several times, and had implicitly assured the British rulers in this regard.

Millions of Indian soldiers, serving in the British army, participated in World War I and II. According to an estimate, during World War II, as many as 2.5 million Indian soldiers were enlisted with the British army, of which around 40 per cent were Muslims – the majority from Punjab and then-North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Britain reckoned that Pakistan would inherit the powerful army that it had created to serve as a safeguard against the

Soviet influence in the region and would act as a frontline state for the West in case of a war. This is why, during the British rule, the headquarters of the British Indian Northern Command was in Rawalpindi. The US and its allies considered present-day Pakistan (then West Pakistan) more important than East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh) – as the US policy during the 1971 war proved. These factors were to determine the direction that the country, created in 1947, was to follow. Jinnah was not cognizant of the fact that his arguments, which seemed to carry weight for fighting the case of Pakistan, would lose their importance in India after the creation of a Muslim majority country. He was also unaware of the nature of new realities and conflicts that were to emerge in the newly-created country with a dominant Muslim majority and the ways to handle them. For instance, in undivided India, to muster Muslim support, Muslims from all schools of thought and their leaders were assured that they would be entirely free to practice their beliefs in the new Islamic country. Following this strategy, he won the support of Shia and Sunni Muslims and their related sub-sects. He was himself a Twelver Shia, a community that was an ardent supporter of the Pakistan movement. Many important leaders of the Barelvi and Deobandi sects of Sunni Islam also supported him. The leaders of the Ahmadi community also favoured partition based on religion. The Communist Party also upheld the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. Many of the prominent leaders of the Communist Party had joined Muslim League. Mian Iftikharuddin was a distinguished name among them. Communist intellectuals played a very important role in securing the support of Muslim farmers in Punjab for the Muslim League and in preparing the election manifesto.

A few days before independence in 1947, Jinnah's speech to the constituent assembly on 11 August was an unsuccessful attempt to assure non-Muslims and Muslims of various schools of thought and beliefs that the promises made to them would be fulfilled and the religious ideology of the dominant sect would not be forcibly imposed on them. Furthermore, the proclamation of freedom for minorities was intended to give India the message that minorities would be

secure in Pakistan, and thus the Muslim minority in Indian provinces should not be discriminated against either. Usually, just one part of the speech is highlighted today, but to have an appropriate analysis perusal of the whole speech is necessary. In his speech, Jinnah said:

> I sincerely hope that with your support and your co-operation we shall make this Constituent Assembly an example to the world. The Constituent Assembly has got two main functions to perform. The first is the very onerous and responsible task of framing the future constitution of Pakistan and the second of functioning as a full and complete sovereign body as the Federal Legislature of Pakistan. We have to do the best we can in adopting a provisional constitution for the Federal Legislature of Pakistan. You know really that not only we ourselves are wondering, but I think, the whole world is wondering at this unprecedented cyclonic revolution which has brought about the clan of creating and establishing two independent sovereign Dominions in this sub-continent. As it is, it has been unprecedented; there is no parallel in the history of the world. This mighty sub-continent with all kinds of inhabitants has been brought under a plan which is titanic, unknown, unparalleled. And what is very important with regards to it is that we have achieved it peacefully and by means of an evolution of the greatest possible character.
>
> Dealing with our first function in this Assembly, I cannot make any well-considered pronouncement at this moment, but I shall say a few things as they occur to me. The first and the foremost thing that I would like to emphasize is this: remember that you are now a sovereign legislative body and you have got all the powers. It, therefore, places on you the gravest responsibility as to how you should take your decisions. The first observation that I would like to make is this: You will no doubt agree with me that the first duty of a government is to maintain law and order, so that the life, property and religious beliefs of its subjects are fully protected by the State.
>
> The second thing that occurs to me is this: One of the biggest curses from which India is suffering - I do not say that other countries are free from it, but I think our condition is much worse - is bribery and corruption. That really is a poison. We must put that down with an iron hand and I hope that you will take adequate measures as soon as it is possible for this Assembly to do so.

Black-marketing is another curse. Well, I know that black marketeers are frequently caught and punished. Judicial sentences are passed or sometimes fines only are imposed. Now you have to tackle this monster, which today is a colossal crime against society, in our distressed conditions, when we constantly face shortage of food and other essential commodities of life. A citizen who does black-marketing commits, I think, a greater crime than the biggest and most grievous of crimes. These black marketeers are really knowing, intelligent and ordinarily responsible people, and when they indulge in black-marketing, I think they ought to be very severely punished, because the entire system of control and regulation of foodstuffs and essential commodities, and cause wholesale starvation and want and even death.

The next thing that strikes me is this: Here again it is a legacy which has been passed on to us. Along with many other things, good and bad, has arrived this great evil, the evil of nepotism and jobbery. I want to make it quite clear that I shall never tolerate any kind of jobbery, nepotism or any any influence directly of indirectly brought to bear upon me. Whenever I will find that such a practice is in vogue or is continuing anywhere, low or high, I shall certainly not countenance it.

I know there are people who do not quite agree with the division of India and the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. Much has been said against it, but now that it has been accepted, it is the duty of everyone of us to loyally abide by it and honourably act according to the agreement which is now final and binding on all. But you must remember, as I have said, that this mighty revolution that has taken place is unprecedented. One can quite understand the feeling that exists between the two communities wherever one community is in majority and the other is in minority. But the question is, whether it was possible or practicable to act otherwise than what has been done, A division had to take place. On both sides, in Hindustan and Pakistan, there are sections of people who may not agree with it, who may not like it, but in my judgement there was no other solution and I am sure future history will record is verdict in favour of it. And what is more, it will be proved by actual experience as we go on that was the only solution of India's constitutional problem. Any idea of a united India could never have worked and in my judgement it would have led us to terrific

disaster. Maybe that view is correct; maybe it is not; that remains to be seen. All the same, in this division it was impossible to avoid the question of minorities being in one Dominion or the other. Now that was unavoidable. There is no other solution. Now what shall we do? Now, if we want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, and especially of the masses and the poor. If you will work in co-operation, forgetting the past, burying the hatchet, you are bound to succeed. If you change your past and work together in a spirit that everyone of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges, and obligations, there will be on end to the progress you will make.

I cannot emphasize it too much. We should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community, because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis and so on, and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas, Khatris, also Bengalis, Madrasis and so on, will vanish. Indeed if you ask me, this has been the biggest hindrance in the way of India to attain the freedom and independence and but for this we would have been free people long long ago. No power can hold another nation, and specially a nation of 400 million souls in subjection; nobody could have conquered you, and even if it had happened, nobody could have continued its hold on you for any length of time but for this. Therefore, we must learn a lesson from this. You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State. As you know, history shows that in England, conditions, some time ago, were much worse than those prevailing in India today. The Roman Catholics and the Protestants persecuted each other. Even now there are some States in existence where there are discriminations made and bars imposed against a particular class. Thank God, we are not starting in those days. We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed

> and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State. The people of England in course of time had to face the realities of the situation and had to discharge the responsibilities and burdens placed upon them by the government of their country and they went through that fire step by step. Today, you might say with justice that Roman Catholics and Protestants do not exist; what exists now is that every man is a citizen, an equal citizen of Great Britain and they are all members of the Nation.
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> Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual but in the political sense as citizens of the State.
>
> Well, gentlemen, I do not wish to take up any more of your time and thank you again for the honour you have done to me. I shall always be guided by the principles of justice and fairplay without any, as is put in the political language, prejudice or ill-will, in other words, partiality or favouritism. My guiding principle will be justice and complete impartiality, and I am sure that with your support and co-operation, I can look forward to Pakistan becoming one of the greatest nations of the world.

The 11 August 1947 speech was delivered when partition had already been announced. Religious fanaticism was at its peak and stories of brutal murders were being reported in various parts of India, particularly in Punjab. In those circumstances, Jinnah's speech was not given any importance by many as they were of the view that if Pakistan was to be a secular and democratic state, then what was the rationale for India's partition since this kind of India was being promised by the Congress as well. The intensity of their dissent can be ascertained from the fact that the publishing of this speech was barred and only Dawn, an English daily, reported it. This speech did not become a part of the school syllabus and the impression of the speech was never accepted at the state level. Jinnah also refrained from reiterating these ideas in the future. Rather, to nullify its impact, his speeches on other occasions emphasised that Pakistan would be governed by

Islamic law. He was secular in his lifestyle, but during the Pakistan movement, he had advocated the two-nation theory on religious grounds. Jinnah had never said in any of his speeches that Pakistan would be a secular country and that the state would have no religion. At the same time in public meetings of the Muslim League, the catchphrase, 'What is the slogan of Pakistan, there is no God but Allah', was enthusiastically chanted in Urdu, which was later modified to: 'What is the meaning of Pakistan, there is no God but Allah'.[1] After the creation of Pakistan, this slogan was not heard for years, but later, religious parties made it a central catchphrase in their struggle for establishing an Islamic system in the country.

In his 11 August 1947 speech, Jinnah tried to assess how conducive the situation was to make Pakistan a democratic state. He realised that the prominent leaders and workers of the Muslim League and Muslim masses did not approve of his changed stance. Rather, they wanted the establishment of an Islamic state that they were assured before partition. Jinnah viewed himself as a practical and realistic person, and therefore withdrew his stance and never mentioned it in any of his later speeches. Instead, he tried to reassure that the government of Pakistan would follow the injunctions of Islam and Shariah. In this context, on 13 January 1948, while delivering a speech at Islamia College, Peshawar, he said that the demand for Pakistan was not for getting a mere piece of land rather it was to have a laboratory where Islamic principles could be tested.

Jinnah had a very disparaging opinion about Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a senior Muslim leader of the Indian National Congress, and used to refer to him as a 'show boy' of Congress. After Jinnah's 11 August speech, the apprehensions of Azad in his address to a congregation of Muslims at Jama Masjid in Delhi, who were set to leave for Pakistan, turned out to be eerily true. A study of this historical speech by a Muslim scholar and politician is essential to assess the political divide

1 The slogan was taken from a poem by Professor Asghar Saudai of Sialkot.

and difference in the Muslim society of India at the time. Excerpts from his speech:

> My brethren, you know what has brought me here today. This congregation at Shahjahan's historic mosque is not an unfamiliar sight for me. Here, I have addressed you on several previous occasions. Since then we have seen many ups and downs. At that time, instead of weariness, your faces reflected serenity, and your hearts, instead of misgivings, exuded confidence. The uneasiness on your faces and the desolation in your hearts that I see today, reminds me of the events of the past few years. Do you remember? I hailed you, you cut off my tongue; I picked my pen, you severed my hand; I wanted to move forward, you broke off my legs; I tried to run, and you injured my back. When the bitter political games of the last seven years were at their peak, I tried to wake you up at every danger signal. You not only ignored my call but revived all the past traditions of neglect and denial. As a result the same perils surround you today, whose onset had previously diverted you from the righteous path.... It was not long ago when I warned you that the two-nation theory was death-knell to a meaningful, dignified life; forsake it. I told you that the pillars upon which you were leaning would inevitably crumble. To all this you turned a deaf ear.... Today, you fear the earth's tremors; once you were virtually the earthquake itself. Today, you fear the darkness; once your existence was the epicentre of radiance. Clouds have poured dirty waters and you have hitched up your trousers. Those were none but your forefathers who not only plunged headlong into the seas, but trampled the mountains, laughed at the bolts of lightening, turned away the tornadoes, challenged the tempests and made them alter their course. It is a sure sign of a dying faith that those who had once grabbed the collars of emperors, are today, clutching their own throats. They have become oblivious of the existence of God as if they had never believed in Him.[2]

The time had come to test the differences in Jinnah and Azad's schools of thought. Before the announcement of the partition of India, and even after that, the communal massacres shocked Jinnah. He believed that after partition, the Hindu-Muslim conflict would dilute, but that was not to be.

2 http://thedelhiwalla.blogspot.com/2015/11/delhi-speeches-abul-kalam-azad-jama.html

On 6 January 1948, Karachi witnessed intense riots. The violence and unrest was aimed at getting ahold of the properties and lands of Hindus migrating to India. According to Narayan Shaheen, on the night of the riots, Jamshed Nusserwanjee came to see Jinnah and found him in a state of shock.[3] Jinnah had promised security for the lives and possessions of Hindus and other minorities in Pakistan. When he went in person to control the riot at DJ College, he was not allowed by the crowd to go any further. He left the world with a heavy heart for minorities.[4] He had known by then that religious minorities did not have a future in the Muslim-dominated society of Pakistan, therefore he repeatedly insisted on the security of minorities. Maulana Azad was certain that the partition was a division of Muslims and the Muslims dwelling in Hindu-majority provinces would face its horrible consequences and the peaceful and diverse Muslim society that evolved for several hundred years would end because of partition. His aforementioned speech reflects this notion.

Jinnah also started worrying about the Muslim minority in India, who were very enthusiastic for Pakistan. On 11 October 1948, while addressing the civil, naval, military, and air force officers, he advised the Muslims left in India should swear allegiance to the State of India.

Jinnah was marooned in his own Pakistan. After 14 August 1947, the state and society of Pakistan fell victim to complex problems. Pakistan had a strong civil and military bureaucracy, which it had inherited from the British. Other than these two institutions, there was no other organised entity or group. A majority of the Muslim League leaders were landlords, who, to protect their estates, had joined Muslim League and gained ascendancy. To remain in power, they had to rely on the civil and military bureaucracy. Jinnah lived for just a year and a month after the creation of Pakistan. He was seriously ill for the last two months of his life, and had lost control over the newly-liberated state. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was

3 Ahmed Saleem, *Pakistan aur Aqliatain* (Karachi: Danyal, 2000).
4 Hasnain Jamal in Daily Duniya, 26 December 2017.

representing the feudal leaders of the Muslim League. He was not very fond of Quaid-e-Azam, because although he was the head of the government, in fact it was the decree of the ceremonial leader, Governor-General Mohammad Ali Jinnah, which prevailed. Liaquat Ali Khan had no constituency in Pakistan, therefore, the civil and military bureaucracy used to take full advantage of his weaknesses.

No matter what viewpoint Jinnah might have had, to win the case of Pakistan he had pleaded that Muslims did not have a future in secular India, hence they should be provided with a separate homeland where they could live their lives according to the injunctions of Islam. He won the case as an outstanding counsel, but after that, it was not possible to transform the state, created in the name of religion, into a secular-democratic state. Such an action would have been in contradiction with the argument that was presented in favour of Pakistan's creation.

Nobody was inclined to make Pakistani society secular, enlightened, and democratic. The civil and military institutions had played no part in the independence movement. They were the two most organised and powerful institutions of the new state, hence they took charge as the supreme authority. The aristocratic landlords and educated elite that had migrated from northern India were proponents of an Islamic system rather than a secular one. All these elements were against Jinnah. In 1949, the Objectives Resolution was therefore passed only six months after his death. All members of the constituent assembly except those belonging to the Congress supported the resolution. They did not have a logical argument to oppose it. All schools of thought, including Shia, Sunni, Ahmadi, and even communist leader Mian Iftikharuddin, who had joined the Muslim League in 1945, supported the resolution. Iftikharuddin argued that the Islamic system had provisions for socialist principles. Every school of thought had a differing interpretation of Islam, but all of them agreed that Pakistan was to be governed according to Islamic principles. That was the stage when diversity was brought to an end in Pakistani society and constitutional and

legal maneuvering formally started to form an Islamic society. After that, it was not possible for any political party to openly proclaim making Pakistan a secular, democratic country in its manifesto – except for the Communist Party.

The adoption of the Objectives Resolution was no ordinary event. It transformed Pakistan into an ideological state which resulted in severe consequences later. There were two distinct ideologies in the Muslim community, and the adoption of the Objectives Resolution was the victory of the ideology of religious parties and religious-minded people. Syed Sibte Hasan, while brilliantly illustrating these conflicting ideologies in his book *Pakistan mein tehzeeb ka irtiqa* (The Evolution of Culture in Pakistan), wrote that there were generally two ideologies about the culture of Pakistan. The first came from those who considered Islam as the basis of culture in Pakistan. To them, Pakistan's culture meant Islamic culture and they claimed that Islamic culture was introduced when Muhammad Bin Qasim defeated Raja Dahir. Thus the culture before Muhammad Bin Qasim was irrelevant as it was the culture of idolaters. The tradition of Muhammad Bin Qasim's culture was strengthened by Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, Shahabuddin Ghori, and Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. During the decline of Mughal Empire, Shah Waliullah and Mujaddid Alf Sani protected Islamic society from dereliction. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, despite having a western disposition, kindled the idea of national consciousness which helped us introspect. Finally, owing to the intellectual pursuit of Allama Iqbal and sagacious efforts of Jinnah, Pakistan came into being. This way, Muslims got an opportunity to flourish Islamic culture for the first time in centuries.

If Islamic culture implies Islamic beliefs and traditions, it exists not only in Pakistan but also in many countries of Asia and Africa. It is not peculiar to Pakistan as Muslims of every country believe in one God; consider Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to be the last prophet and treat his sayings as edicts; acknowledge Holy Quran to be a revelation from God; deem offering prayers, observing fast, pilgrimage to Mecca, and giving *Zakat* as religious obligations; celebrate *Eidul Fitr* and

Eidul Azha; and perform rituals like circumcision, *Bismillah*, and *Nikkah*. The traditional thought of Muslims across the world, and especially those from Western Asia, is deeply influenced by Islam, and their cultural values, allusions, metaphors, and symbols have a lot in common. But despite these similarities, any sane person would not consider the Arabian and the Indonesian culture the same, although both are Muslim cultures. Similarly, cultures of Iran and Morocco, or of Afghanistan and Sudan are not identical because their cultures are not based on religion and cannot be identified with respect to religion. If religion were the basis of culture, there would not have been any difference in Muslim cultures from Malaysia to Morocco.

Those who take Pakistani culture as Islamic culture, tend to forget that the dominant aspects of the culture here have nothing to do with Islam. Our language and dialects, food and clothing, tools, architecture, music and art, poetry, literature, norms and traditions have little or no association with the culture of Arabia at the time Islam was introduced there. Nor can we fit Pakistani culture into the Arabian culture's mould. These differences cannot be evaluated on religious parameters. Rather they owe their differences to the geographical and physical conditions and lifestyles of the two places. A Muslim convert from Britain or America would not be able to change his or her cultural traditions. Islam does not prohibit such people from wearing trousers, using forks and knives to eat, watching movies, and singing songs.

The second ideology is of those who deny the existence of a Pakistani culture. They acknowledge Pakistan as a state and support its integrity, but they stress on the primacy of regional cultures. For them, the traditions of regional languages, literature, dance and music, social practices and values, etc. are distinct from each other. Moreover, these regional cultures have been prevailing for thousands of years and thus predate the creation of Pakistan.

Propagators of the first ideology emphasised the cultural unity of Pakistan. They could not imagine unity in diversity.

Proponents of the second ideology insisted on diversity. They could not envisage diversity within unity. These ideologies were in conflict right from day one, and the conflict continues. It was a reflection of two opposing political discourses. The first ideology was reinforced by a strong centre, the second by provincial autonomy. The groups that supported the idea that more power should be vested in the centre supported cultural unity while those in favour of provincial autonomy laid emphasis on propagation of regional cultures, because they thought that regional cultures could not progress without provincial autonomy. Surprisingly, Pakistan movement leaders were strong proponents of provincial autonomy and advocated lesser authority for the centre before the creation of Pakistan. But when Pakistan was established, these leaders changed their stance and began to favour a strong centre.

It is an interesting yet inauspicious fact that the first encounter between the supporters of a strong centre and provincial autonomy came in the form of riots over ethnicity and language. The flag-bearers of a powerful centre were not willing to acknowledge the cultural and linguistic identity of East Bengal. They argued that Pakistan characterised a Muslim nation and since Urdu represented the Islamic culture, it had the right to become the sole national language. Bengalis were not prepared to accept this argument.

It was less than one year after partition when in Dhaka, the biggest city of East Pakistan, a series of public rallies began. On 11 March 1948, a large procession was taken out which demanded national language status for Bangla. This procession was heading to the office of Prime Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin. The reason for people's agitation was that the new currency notes and coins bore only Urdu text. This protest was the first step towards Bengali nationalism. Police tried to disperse the rally by use of force, which injured many participants. Was that not a victory of Bengali nationalism over the two-nation theory? It was a tragic twist of history that on that day the injured protesters included Sher-e Bengal (Lion of Bengal) A. K. Fazlul Huq, who had presented the Lahore resolution in 1940 and was leading

this procession. Besides him, a young man was vigorously chanting slogans. This was Sheikh Mujibur Rehman of Muslim Students Federation. When the issue of language grew intense, Jinnah went to Dhaka on 21 March 1948 to address Bengalis. In the historical racecourse ground of Dhaka, while addressing the people in English, he said, 'let me make it clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language'. His statement came as a shock for the Muslims of Bengal. They could not have imagined that after their ardent struggle for the creation of Pakistan, based on the two-nation theory, their language, culture and identity would be overlooked in the same Pakistan.

On 23 June 1949, some Muslim League leaders of Bengal formed All Pakistan Awami Muslim League with Abdul Hameed Bhashani, as the party head, whereas the party's joint secretary was Mujibur Rehman. Later the word 'Muslim' was removed from the party's name, as all its leaders wanted it to be a secular and democratic party. Under the leadership of Awami League, a *Juktu Front* (United Front) was created, which wiped out Muslim League in the 1954 provincial elections. Out of 237 seats, the United Front won 223 seats whereas Muslim League was able to secure only nine seats. It was the same Bengal which had helped Muslim League win 113 out of 119 Muslim seats in the 1946 elections. Only eight years later, the Muslims of Bengal changed their decision and embraced Bengali nationalism. The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 was a natural and logical consequence of that decision.

After the adoption of the Objectives Resolution, those advocating for cultural unity for Pakistan gained more credence. The religious parties started pressuring the government to make the resolution functional to ensure that the forthcoming constitution should be according to the injunctions and principles of Islam and Shariah. An overwhelming majority of constituent assembly members had voted in the resolution's favour, hence, any resistance against the demand of religious parties was improbable. On the other hand, the civil and military bureaucracies were busy strengthening their control in the corridors of power and

were uninterested in creating any hindrances either. The civil and military elite were apprehensive of democracy because power gets transferred to people's representatives under democratic and constitutional institutions, and in that case, they would have to work as subordinates. Since religious parties were in agreement with cultural unity based on Islamic identity, they had no support in East Pakistan, Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan. However, they had some political clout in Punjab. The religious-political parties readily wanted a constitution that would deem Pakistan a one-nation country rather than an abode of different nations, thus denying the rights of different communities dwelling in provinces. The civil and military bureaucracies were, however, supporting a political system based on the idea of a one, single Muslim nation with a strong centre, rather than an Islamic system. Towards this end, various steps were to be taken. Due to immediate consensus on this point, both factions were following the strategy of cooperation and serving their mutual interests. It was yet to be decided that who would dominate the power structure. Religious forces reckoned well that the constitution of Pakistan should be made at the earliest, and according to their whims and wishes. The civil and military bureaucracies did not want a clergy-proposed constitution. They needed more time to make a constitution of their choice and design political arrangements accordingly. In this situation, these forces were concurrently in alliance and conflict with each other. One faction wanted to speed up the constitution-making process while the other needed time and was seeking delay.

As per the Objectives Resolution, the government constituted the Talimat-e-Islami Board comprising experts on the Quran and Sunnah to give recommendations for the constitution on Islamic principles.[5] The board included Maulana Zafar Ahmed Ansari, Mufti Muhammad Shafi, and other eminent scholars. Another committee, the Basic Principles Committee, was assigned the task to compile a draft constitution and

5 Hafeezur Rehman Siddiqui, "Qarardad-e Maqaasid say Islami Qanoon tak," *Fikr-o-Nazr 20, no. 9-10 (1983): 214.*

adapt the recommendations of the board. The committee presented a draft constitution on 7 September 1950. This draft had nothing Islamic in it except a clause that made studying the Quran obligatory for every Muslim. It did not include a single recommendation given by the Talimat-e-Islami Board. When this draft was presented, religious scholars were taken aback as it was devoid of features that should have been there in the spirit of the Objectives Resolution. The board members, in a joint statement on 13 October 1950, clarified that they had given their recommendations according to the Quran and Sunnah; and that the committee should be asked why the recommendations of the board were not accepted.[6]

Sensing a strong backlash, the government withdrew the draft on 7 September 1950 and promised that a new constitutional sketch would be drafted. At that time, a complication emerged as there were several sects within Muslims who failed to agree among themselves on various issues. In such a situation, how was it possible to create an Islamic constitution that would be accepted by all Muslims? To resolve this, as many as 31 scholars from different schools of thought and religious parties held a meeting in Karachi in January 1951. They produced a 22-point consensus document entitled 'Basic Principles of Islamic State'

The government remained placid on this issue. In a public meeting on 8 May 1952, Maulana Maududi demanded that the government should complete the constitution-making process by the year end. He also presented a summarized eight-point version of basic principles. Meanwhile, a movement to declare Ahmadis non-Muslim was launched. This demand was added to the eight-point agenda, so that their 'hegemony' at key positions could be ended and the country could be saved from their 'nefarious designs'.[7]

The government constituted a new committee in July 1952 which prepared its report that was finally unveiled on 22 December 1952. A group of religious scholars mulled over

6 Ibid, p. 215.
7 Ibid, p. 220.

the report in January 1953 and found the report acceptable as it was very similar to the earlier 22-point document. The constituent assembly, therefore, started deliberating on the report. Muhammad Ali Bogra, the then prime minister, however, decided to halt the constitution-making process; and suggested that the Government of India Act 1935 be adopted as a temporary constitution after making a few necessary amendments. This scheme was strongly opposed as the country was already being run under the 1935 Act, and needed a permanent constitution.[8]

The constitution-making process was restarted. By mid-1954, two revisions of the draft were completed. Only the third and final revision of the constitution was to be done before its enactment on 25 December 1954. The assembly was, however, dissolved on 24 October 1954 which led to a grave constitutional crisis.[9]

After the adoption of the Objectives Resolution, the power that was acquired by the religious parties owed to the fact that through this resolution, the foundations of the state were based on religion and the Muslim community of Pakistan had started segregating on sectarian lines. In this context, renowned intellectual I. A. Rehman says:

> We find that between 1947 and 1953 the 'religious slogan group' acquired a toehold in the political arena, thanks to the failure of the 'democratic ideals group' to honour Jinnah's advice to keep religion out of politics and also its failure to promote democratic norms. Further, it made the grave mistake of resisting democratic demands by seeking refuge under a religious canopy. The 'religious slogan group' took an exaggerated view of its strength and challenged the government by launching the anti-Ahmadi agitation in 1953. It lost because the state services, especially the army, had not abandoned the colonial policy of denying religious/sectarian elements any accommodation at the cost of law and order. But this was the only victory the 'democratic ideals group' was able to achieve against the 'religious

8 Ibid, p. 221.
9 Ibid, p. 222.

slogan group'.[10]

By crushing the anti-Ahmadi movement, the civil and military bureaucracy had forced the religious parties to take a step back. After the dissolution of the constituent assembly, the field was left open. Eighty members were chosen from provincial assemblies for setting up the second constituent assembly. A new government was formed in which Bogra was made the prime minister again, but this time he had no authority. All the power and authority was vested in the top bureaucrats and military elite. Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad was a bureaucrat, Defence Minister General Ayub Khan was the army's commander-in-chief, Finance Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Ali was a bureaucrat and Iskander Mirza had been both a major-general and a bureaucrat. The ministers included two army officials and thus the army formally entered the corridors of power. Before preparing for the constitution, the provinces were abolished in the western wing of the country and a one-unit system was introduced. A parity system of equal representation was introduced to reduce the numeric majority of the eastern wing.

Pakistan's first constitution was enacted on 23 March 1956. This constitution had 13 segments, which contained 234 articles. In this constitution, Pakistan was declared an Islamic republic. The post of Governor-General was abolished and was replaced by President. It was decided that the head of the state would be a Muslim. All the laws would be according to Islamic principles, Quran and Sunnah. Muslims would be provided every opportunity to live their lives according to the teachings of Islam and the country would operate under a federal parliament. Under this constitution, the first-ever elections were to be conducted in the country after two years. With the alliance of the former small provinces of East Pakistan and West Pakistan, a democratically elected government was imminent, which would have ended the supremacy of civil and military bureaucracy in the power echelons. Sensing this danger, the first martial law was imposed in the country on

10 I. A. Rehman, "40 Years of Zia: How Zia Redefined Pakistan", *Dawn*, 5 July 2017.

7 October 1958. President Iskander Mirza was the first army officer of the subcontinent who had received training from Britain's renowned Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He later joined the civil bureaucracy. Mirza appointed General Ayub Khan as martial law administrator and then removed him from the post to make him the prime minister. Ayub Khan's service tenure was to end a few months before the imposition of martial law. President Mirza granted him an extension for two years. The same general sent packing his 'benefactor' within 20 days of martial law imposition. He was sent to Quetta first and then to Britain. General Ayub Khan formed a constitutional committee headed by Justice Shahabuddin, which also included Manzoor Qadir and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. In May 1961, a constitutional report was furnished to General Ayub and on 1 March 1962, the constitution was approved. This was a presidential constitution: the National Assembly had 156 seats, of which six were allocated to women. The electoral college comprised eighty thousand 'basic democrat' members. It was obligatory for the president to be a Muslim, but for the speaker, who could serve as the acting president, there was no such condition. The president was the chief executive of the country, who could nominate the ministers. The martial law was lifted with the enactment of the constitution, but General Ayub Khan forcibly took reins of the country with the help of army.

With the dictatorship of General Ayub Khan, the fissures in Pakistani society, which had started appearing right after 1947, became evident. The society was now clearly divided into four segments: a) religious and sectarian extremists, b) military and civil elite, and agents of capitalists and feudal class, c) activists fighting for the rights of nationalities in Pakistan, and d) supporters of moderate political and democratic parties.

The industrial development that took place during the dictatorial regime benefitted 22 families and some selected regions of the country only. Common people endured inflation, price hikes, and shortage of goods. According to renowned journalist M. Ziauddin:

> During the rule of Ayub Khan, we got accustomed to relying on external debt. After SEATO and CENTO agreements with the US and Europe, we got free-of-cost weapons and ammunition. They also built our cantonments, therefore, our military budget remained unaffected. America used to give us wheat costing almost nothing, which we used to sell to meet the civilian budget. To remain in power, Ayub Khan needed support from the feudal and business classes. Everyone knows how honourable Fatima Jinnah was defeated. Proceeds from selling the jute of East Pakistan were spent in West Pakistan. A separatist sentiment in East Pakistan was evoked during Ayub Khan's regime.[11]

With Ayub Khan as the ruler, the military and civil bureaucracy, and the agents of feudal and business classes were governing Pakistan. This ruling group had adopted the strategy to use religious parties in politics, without letting them dominate enough and to make Pakistan a security state by inculcating a fear of a perpetual enmity with India. Those political parties or nationalities which stood in opposition to them were branded as anti-Pakistan or agents of India. In the view of General Ayub, most people were not wise enough to be allowed the right to vote. Along with that, he also enacted laws like EBDO and PRODA to clear away important political figures. These rules were used to disqualify over 7,000 political opponents for seven years. After the 1962 Constitution, presidential elections were held. General Ayub was not facing any significant competition, but several politicians convinced Fatima Jinnah to become a presidential candidate. Fatima Jinnah received immense public response in East and West Pakistan, but she lost the elections due to unfair means, which caused severe public resentment. To distract people, General Ayub undertook Operation Gibraltar that led to the 1965 war with India. The war caused serious damage to the country's economy. America levelled sanctions on Pakistan for breaching the agreement by using American weapons in a war against India. This war weakened Ayub Khan to a great degree: he was forced to enter into the Tashkent peace agreement; resentment against him grew within the armed forces; Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto parted ways with

11 BBC Urdu, 22 April 2019.

him to form Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and launched a campaign against General Ayub which gained impetus due to prevailing economic problems. Due to the sanctions on fundamental human and democratic rights, students and labourers also joined the movement against Ayub. Protests also erupted in East Pakistan and during 1968-69, the whole country witnessed a series of demonstrations and strikes. The military and civil bureaucracy and their allies were curtailed to some extent. Ayub Khan's commander-in-chief, General Yahya Khan, dismissed him, abrogated the 1962 Constitution, ended the one-unit and parity system of equal representation, and held general elections in 1970. Awami League won a majority in the parliament and PPP emerged as the second largest party with a majority in West Pakistan. But Yahya and his fellow generals and politicians did not transfer power to the parliament. East Pakistan was subjected to a military operation which resulted in the formation of Bangladesh. During this crisis, the Yahya government, comprising military and civil bureaucracy, used religious parties against Awami League. After its defeat, the Pakistan Army surrendered and following immunity under the Geneva Conventions, returned to their country.

Viewing the result of the first-ever general elections held on the basis of adult franchise, it can be ascertained that a majority of Pakistanis rejected the religion-based ideology of Pakistan. The popularity of Bengali nationalist and secular parties, and the success of Awami League reflected the fact that the Muslims of united Bengal, who had given immense support to Muslim League and its two-nation theory in the 1945-46 elections, proved that nations cannot be formed solely on the basis of religion. Today, Bangladesh is a secular state and its Muslim citizens are free to adhere to their religious beliefs. It can be said that, in 1970, the Bengali Muslims broke away from the religious divide in politics which was introduced by the British and which had resulted in the partition of India. This, undoubtedly, was an amazing ideological, political, and social change. The Muslim society of the remaining Pakistan was, however, yet to go through many difficult stages. After the failures of Ayub and Yahya Khan, the rule of military

and civil bureaucracy came to an end as they were forced to transfer power to the PPP. The new parliament created the 1973 Constitution, but the political parties could not come out of the ambience that was created by the religious parties since 1947. Islam was declared as the state religion in the 1973 Constitution and Pakistan was proclaimed an Islamic Republic. Several clauses in the constitution and subsequent amendments clarified the fact that after the secession of East Pakistan, the religious parties, once again, enjoyed considerable influence in Pakistan.

After the humiliating defeat in the war of 1971, Bhutto made a vigorous effort to secure the release of prisoners of war from Indian custody and take back regions occupied by India. As a nationalist Pakistani, he was on good terms with China and was against India. There were a large number of leaders and workers in his party with similar dispositions. Regarding India, there was not much of a difference between the thoughts of religious parties and his own party. Bhutto and his party were, however, of the opinion that with the slogan of Islamic socialism, they would be able to keep the people away from religious fundamentalist forces. But it did not happen, and the slogan damaged them politically. The policy of nationalisation resulted in the bureaucracy taking control of the economy. The country was halved but the size of the army was doubled. Bhutto dissociated from South Asia and established relations with West Asian countries, attempted to unite Muslim countries through the Islamic Summit Conference, initiated the nuclear programme, and with a constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis non-Muslim. These steps helped the defeated military elite and religious parties come closer, which culminated in the formation of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), martial law and Bhutto's execution. The forces that gained dominance in the country had no regard for a diverse society in Pakistan. They were against the identity of regional nationalities and could go to any extent to convert Pakistan's multiethnic, multicultural society into a Muslim nation. Bhutto had failed to analyse the situation. He had banned the only largest democratic, secular and nationalist party, National Awami Party, branding it a

traitor to the country. He was fully supported by the military and civil bureaucracy and religious parties in this step. After putting an end to National Awami Party, he lost the support of an ally and fell victim to his opponents. Bhutto's decision to involve corps commanders in negotiations with the PNA was his biggest mistake. This created an impression that he had become weak, which was not the situation. In the general elections held on 7 March 1977, the PPP bagged 153 seats, whereas the PNA secured only 36. The latter complained of rigging on a few dozen seats. The military and civil elites, in the leadership of army chief General Zia-ul-Haq, were ready to assume control of the country. General Zia dismissed the first elected government and prime minister after a coup d'état, held the constitution in abeyance and tricked the people with a promise to hold fresh elections after three months. Most of the religious and political parties in the PNA backed General Zia who assumed a religious posture and started enforcing Shariah with full throttle. I. A. Rehman has succinctly summarized the steps taken by General Zia between 1978 and 1985:

> A Federal Shariat Court was created for enforcing religious laws, striking down laws it found repugnant to Islam, and with some power to make laws…. The parliament was designated as the Majlis-e-Shura, and an arbitrarily amended Objectives Resolution – used hitherto as a preamble to the constitution – was made its substantive part. Furthermore, an attempt was made to subvert the system of democratic elections by holding party-less polls. In addition, Zia amended the constitutional provisions relating to qualifications for membership of assemblies and disqualification of members to make them suggestive of respect for religious criteria…. Many factors helped Zia to impose his belief on the people including measures that lacked Islamic sanction. He fully exploited the political advantages the religious parties had won from poorly performing quasi-democratic governments. And the conflict in Afghanistan yielded him enormous dividends. He was able to convince a large body of people that through his Afghan policy he had brought glory to Islam.[12]

12 Rehman, "40 Years of Zia: How Zia Redefined Pakistan".

The military government, benefited by the Islamic revolution in Iran and Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, was able to win the support of the West. Both events not only altered the course of world politics, but also shook the foundations of Muslim societies and created a deep-rooted and intense Shia-Sunni sectarian divide. Muslim societies had never experienced this kind of situation in the past as Muslims belonging to different sects had been living in harmony and mutual affinity for centuries.

It will not be incorrect to say that with the Iranian revolution, the first religious state emerged in the history of Islam. Along with thousands of communist Tudeh Party members, liberal, progressive, and democratic persons were killed indiscriminately. The Muslim world was disturbed by the revolution. Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia, responded by extending full-scale funding for anti-Shia groups, which resulted in a sectarian clash that started getting more violent. Within no time, a proxy war started between Iran and Saudi Arabia in various Muslim countries through extremist sectarian organisations. Religion can be a shared value among Muslim societies, but it also carries sectarian differences and diversity which, instead of creating unity and harmony among Muslim countries, could lead to militant confrontation, and sometimes, a full-fledged war. Its extreme was witnessed in civil wars in the Middle East where as many as one and a half million Muslims were killed by militant groups supported by these two countries in over twenty years. This happened in countries and regions where Muslims from different sects were living in peace for centuries.

A few months before the Iranian revolution, the communist party of Afghanistan took over the reins of government in 1978. The Saur Revolution forcibly introduced revolutionary reforms in the country to transform its ancient Muslim tribal society into a modern one. The tribal society of Afghanistan was not prepared for an overnight revolutionary change; hence a militant insurgency began against the communist government. The communist government tried to suppress the resistance with force and thousands of political opponents

were killed. As a result, a revolt against the government spread across the country. The strife within the Communist Party turned intense and the party's general secretary, General Nur Mohammed Tarkai was assassinated on the behest of Hafizullah Amin in 1979. The Soviet Union was not pleased and resorted to military intervention in Afghanistan. Amin was murdered and the power was shifted to pro-Soviet Babrak Karmal of the Parcham faction. Islamic countries strongly reacted to the Soviet intervention. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) demanded immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops, whereas in the United Nations General Assembly, a resolution against the Soviet invasion was passed by a convincing margin: 104 votes in favour to 18 against.

A resistance movement against the Afghan government was started by anti-communist groups, collectively known as the 'Mujahideen'. They were provided military and ideological training by the US, Britain, and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and China spearheaded in providing financial support to the Mujahideen. However, fundamental changes started taking place in the Soviet Union when Mikhail Gorbachev came into power. In February 1988, he decided to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan. It was in General Zia's interest to remain engaged in the so-called Afghan Jihad as this helped him to keep ruling the country with full force. With this background, he did not favour the peace talks taking place in Geneva. The Soviet army returned from Afghanistan in 1988 and six months later, General Zia died in a plane crash. During his rule, General Zia had immensely strengthened the religious extremist forces and society was practically under their control. Following his death, four weak democratically elected governments came into power. The last one, headed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, was overthrown by General Pervez Musharraf in a coup on 12 October 1999. In a perverse sense, the fourth Pakistani military dictator was fortunate that the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks took place as it helped him gain US administration's trust. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US demanded Osama bin Laden's custody, which the Taliban government turned down. President George W Bush categorically warned

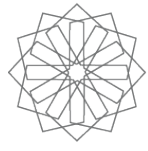
Pakistan's military ruler that Pakistan should decide whether it supported Taliban or America and its allies. The military government of General Musharraf immediately announced support to America agreeing to all conditions and became a party to the war against the same Taliban who had Pakistan's backing until then.

Armed with a United Nations Security Council resolution, the US and its allies started a military operation in Afghanistan and ended the Taliban government of Mullah Omar. Bin Laden and his accomplices, however, managed to escape from Afghanistan. After Pakistan's decision to join the US effort, the Taliban started operations in Pakistan and the War on Terror entered the country. In the present situation, the global war against terrorism has been won to a great extent. The Taliban have lost its military capability in Pakistan, Osama bin Laden has been killed, and the strength of Al-Qaeda, Daesh, and other international terrorist organisations is diminishing. However, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda are still active in Afghanistan. While General Zia had put on a Sherwani during the times of Afghan Jihad, General Musharraf donned his best suit when the US was fighting against Islamic extremists. The latter was also photographed with his pet dogs to present a liberal image.

From 2008 to 2018, two elected governments transferred power on the basis of consociation. Both governments completed their tenure but not a single prime minister has been able to remain in office for five years. The two biggest parties – the PPP and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz – took advantage of the situation and passed the Eighteenth Amendment which can be termed the most significant development in the political history of Pakistan. Owing to this constitutional amendment, provinces have secured considerable authority. The amendment is actually an indirect acceptance of the fact that the Pakistani state is a multi-nation state. There are people who are against this viewpoint, and they want to end diversity through a strong centre. That is why they vehemently oppose this historical amendment.

Pakistan has not transformed into a modern nation state even 74 years after its creation. Since it has not happened yet, the basic contradictions within the society still exist and their economic, political, and social consequences are evident. The undemocratic powers are not willing to pave way for democracy. There is a strong desire to abolish the Eighteenth Amendment and owing to the state oppression, nationalist sentiments are flourishing among the smaller nationalities. The victory against terrorism at the global level has isolated the religious extremist forces within the country. Although the group favouring their ideology is present in society, due to international pressure the state is unable to support them openly. The popularity of moderate democratic parties remains high among the masses and despite all pressures, their resolve to make parliament supreme is still conspicuous.

Today, the horrific results of making Pakistan a security and ideological state, instead of a nation-state, are apparent. The country is isolated on a regional and international level. The state is facing a crisis. The economic crisis has become perilous. A country with a GDP of less than $300 billion cannot afford extraordinary unproductive expenditures. The way to take the Pakistani state and society out of the crisis and disharmony is very simple: The supremacy of the elected parliament should be accepted by strengthening the federal parliamentary system; all institutions should work within their constitutional limits; economic, political and social relationship should be restored with neighbouring countries; to end the country's isolation at the international level, concrete and clear measures should be taken to assure the international community that the state is against extremism and terrorism. The aforementioned suggestions appear very simple, but our 74-year history shows that we have become accustomed to causing irredeemable loss to the country by denying simple facts.



Diaspora and the Desire to Fix the Native Country

Harris Khalique

> There's a country at my shoulder,
> growing larger – soon it will burst,
> rivers will spill out, run down my chest.
> – Moniza Alvi

In 1998, when I was studying in London, our literary icon Qurratulain Haider came to stay there for a few months. She was living with her cousin, who was also related to one of my aunts. Therefore, I used to take the liberty of visiting her every other day after finishing my classes. It was a large, welcoming family residing in a spacious house in the Hounslow neighbourhood. They had a huge circle of friends from all over South Asia who would gather at their place quite frequently over tea or a meal in the evening. On one such occasion, I saw someone called Mr Gupta, referred to as Gupta Ji, who had locked horns with some argumentative Pakistanis from the diaspora. It was a fiery debate over the perpetual India-Pakistan conflict. Please be reminded that it was also the year when both countries had tested their nuclear

arms capability – Pakistan for the first time and India for the second after a break of 24 years. Gupta Ji was alone among so many people of Pakistani origin and had to reluctantly back down in that discussion. But somehow he felt that from among the company I was the one who came across both cordial and understanding.

As people began to leave, Gupta Ji offered me a ride to the tube station. He couldn't wait to switch on the ignition of his car before saying: 'Harris Ji, these people don't understand the signs of the times. You remember the miracle three years ago when the icons of Lord Ganesh started drinking milk across temples in India and abroad? In my view that was the sign of the coming times. That from now on any obstacles in the rise of Hindu power in the world will be removed.' I was flabbergasted. For the rest of the drive we chatted about singers Shamshad Begum and Mohammed Rafi. While sitting in a corner of that wagon in the tube and even after reaching my hostel room, I couldn't stop thinking of what he had said. It took me a while to understand the connection that Gupta Ji had made between Lord Ganesh drinking milk and the imminence in the rise of Hindu power, as he had put it. One of the mythical traits of the Hindu god Lord Ganesh is that he clears any hindrances in your way.

It is well known that the likes of Gupta Ji among the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) remotely encouraged and generously funded the intensification of Hindutva and, subsequently, the populist rise of Narendra Modi in their native country. Here, a parallel can be drawn with present day Pakistan – although the ideologies certainly differ in nature – to the ascent of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and the populist rise of Imran Khan among certain sections of the population. Undoubtedly, a major part of Khan's support has come from large segments of Pakistani diaspora. Nevertheless, one must accept that the peculiar responses that emerge from among the 'influential diaspora' (a term I will come to define later in the essay) to socio-political developments in their native country and their desire to build an ideal Islamic state do not begin or end with Khan. Since decades, they have continued

to fund mosques and madrassas run by politically-radicalised clerics or orthodox religious organisations. Not the majority among them but some small sections within the diaspora even provided young men to participate in terror attacks organised by the Taliban and their affiliates in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the militant uprisings led by ISIS/Daesh in the Middle East.

The urge to look back

Diaspora in any country – particularly when materially better off – is inclined to participate in the politics of their adopted country, both to secure their interests as a community and to be able to look the part. They also get hugely interested in the politics of their native country due to the innate feeling of belonging and a subconscious mix of guilt and nostalgia that in turn develops a sense of obligation. According to Elizabeth Mavroudi, such feelings among the diaspora often peak at times of perceived need to act in order to help the homeland. Since there is a physical disconnect, or in many cases they have already surrendered their previous citizenship or they may belong to the second generation of migrants, there are limited ways of getting involved in formal politics of the native country. Therefore, the diaspora takes to indirect and informal political activity to influence mainstream politics in their native country. They hold meetings and bring out rallies on issues of their ancestral homelands that have little to do with their adopted countries. Above all, they send money to their families, charities, religious institutions, and their favoured political groups. Most recently, those living in diaspora actively got involved through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc. In some cases, they have created their own blogs dedicated to influencing the politics in their ancestral homeland.

'Otherisation' pushes them to their roots

'Islam, Race, and Pluralism in the Pakistani Diaspora' by Craig Considine (Routledge, 2018) is an important book based on

extensive field work. Considine specifically looks at the issues of intolerance, exclusion, vilification and paranoia faced by Pakistani diaspora in the United States and the Republic of Ireland in the aftermath of 9/11 and the consequent 'war on terror'. Although none of the 19 hijackers involved in the 11 September 2001 attacks were Pakistanis, some masterminds and backend operatives were found to have well-defined links to Pakistan. Ironically, ten years later in 2011, Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi-born leader of al-Qaeda and his immediate family, were also found to be hiding in Pakistan.

The editor for this Routledge series under which Considine's book is published is Anne J Kershen, a professor at the Queen Mary College, London. Kershen highlights in her preface to Considine's book that today Pakistan is seen as a home for terrorists and religious fanatics, an intolerant place where non-Muslims or the wrong kind of Muslims are targeted and at times executed. As these attacks and atrocities against marginalised populations continue, many in the West regard Pakistanis in diaspora as disciples of the extremists. If I jog my personal memory, I recall that in 2015, I happened to be in Pittsburgh, US, on the anniversary of 9/11. I was invited by the National Public Radio (NPR) for a programme. Three out of four phone calls received in the studio from random listeners hinted at Pakistan as one of the countries responsible for global terrorism. This goes without saying that average Americans have little or no idea of how their own state policies have perpetuated many of these conflicts and wars across the world.

Considine takes a definite position against Islamophia in the West, particularising it for Pakistanis by coining the term 'Pakophobia'. He acknowledges that he has dedicated his life to building bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States and Western Europe. From a liberal, inclusive and plural perspective, Considine has done rigorous research and analysis based on assessing post-9/11 policies of Western states, evaluating the changing patterns of social behaviour among majority communities, and some detailed personal interviews of Pakistani men in diaspora. He gathers

and processes enough data to conclude that both religious pluralism and interculturalism can serve as a kind of a formula to peacefully move forward and nurture a healthy society. However, for a reader like me, the book also confirms that since Pakistani diaspora is being looked at with suspicion like never before in their adopted countries, it has led to their further marginalisation and increased confusion – about where they actually belong. When they are made to feel like second-class citizens in their adopted countries because of how their native country is viewed, a renewed struggle for identity and belonging is waged in their minds. Their desire to somehow fix their native country is further augmented. Economically and politically their native country is a second-class country; but there they could have been more easily considered first-class citizens. Nevertheless, they or their parents had left it for a better life elsewhere. Perhaps, as a consequence, they feel like becoming even more involved in Pakistani polity and society than until a few years ago.

Since its inception Pakistan has moved from one economic or political crisis to another. Hence, like Mavroudi says, its diaspora has felt the need to act in support of the homeland on many occasions in the past. But with their interest in Pakistan further strengthened by their current circumstances in their adopted countries, Pakistani state and political actors are also reaching out to them more enthusiastically. Any state in general but resource-constrained ones like Pakistan in particular, which incessantly seek material support from the wealthier sections of their diaspora, encourage the feeling of belonging and sense of obligation among their diasporic population. In order to do that such states grant official recognition to their citizenship status – whether dual or on the basis of their birthplace – and introduce financial incentives on their investments and remittances received from them. States even confer upon or contemplate giving the right to vote to diaspora in the elections held in their native country, as is presently happening in Pakistan, while knowing fully well that they neither live in their native country nor would they ever return. Since cyber technology has turned the world into a global village over the past couple of decades, it becomes

far easier for the native state to engage with its diaspora. Mavroudi also says that now borders between countries are being transgressed and the supposed 'natural' relationships between nation-state–territory are being dismantled.

Temporary diaspora

Let me now come to broadly define the four categories of Pakistanis or people of Pakistani origin living in other parts of the world for longer periods of time. I define the first category as those who largely belong to the artisan and labour classes. The better skilled among them are encouraged by the state itself to seek employment overseas. One reason being a narrow industrial base at home and the other our consistent financial policy of dependence on remittances for foreign exchange.

This first category also includes many white-collar professionals who the ever-struggling Pakistani economy has found hard to absorb in the job market. These people retain their Pakistani citizenship, get their work visas periodically stamped and renewed, and, eventually come back to Pakistan after their contracts expire or they reach retirement age. They are Pakistani citizens working abroad for a stipulated time. Except for a small portion of their income spent on subsistence in countries where they work, a large part of their earning is sent home regularly or brought back with them when they return. They invest in small businesses in some cases and are most likely to support the construction industry by building or buying houses in their home country.

From those scrubbing floors to workshop attendants, salespersons to waiters, plumbers to engineers, paramedics to doctors, drivers to crane operators, a large number of these Pakistanis live abroad – mostly in Middle Eastern countries but they are also spread in some African countries and the far eastern Asian nations. There are many working in Afghanistan as well. Toiling either under the scorching sun at oil rigs and construction sites or surviving harsh working conditions on factory floors, these Pakistanis earn their bread

and butter and run their extended households back home. In many cases, they have inadequate housing and limited medical care. But they provide for both their families and the country. In fact, they bring dollars to the coffers of Pakistani state and raise our foreign currency reserves. It has been almost 50 years since Pakistan has been providing labour to fuel the Middle Eastern economies. However, compared to the number of people settled in North America, Europe or Australia, the number of those Pakistanis who have been extended citizenship in any of these Middle Eastern countries remains incredibly small. The ones who become better off after working in the region also prefer to move to the West.

Those belonging to this first category of Pakistanis living abroad must certainly enjoy the right to vote and the right to participate in the political process back home. They are temporary diaspora which happens to live abroad because Pakistan could not provide them with basic economic opportunities to survive and better their lot. There can be no objection to the state playing an active role for including them in the decision-making processes that affect them and their families and communities. Also, it shouldn't matter to any of us which political party or leader they support and cast their vote for. In fact, the state must facilitate them in setting up businesses if they wish, building assets, and acquiring property in Pakistan. Unfortunately, this temporary diaspora remains most neglected at the hands of an elite-captured Pakistani state because they largely belong to the working class.

The treatment meted out to them from Pakistan's diplomatic missions in countries where they work to the airports in their country when they arrive is extremely shabby and very different from the reception of those affluent middle class professionals travelling back to Pakistan from Europe and North America. Pakistan has never demonstrated any willingness to negotiate better working conditions for its labour in Middle Eastern countries nor accords any favours to their family members who live without them in the home country or to the workers themselves when they visit or

return. But successive governments have always encouraged them to invest through different financial schemes announced from time to time to increase Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves and arrest the ever-increasing financial debt.

Forced into diaspora

Those falling in the second category of Pakistani diaspora are the ones who had to flee the country after facing imminent threats to their life or freedom due to political repression under dictatorial regimes. Most of them had to literally leave under duress and live in self-imposed exile to ensure safety, security and livelihood for themselves and their families. They escaped prisons, torture, public flogging and unemployment. The biggest number of such Pakistanis moved out of the country during General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law regime (1977-1988). Most were journalists, academics, political activists and functionaries of the deposed previous government. Some of them continue to be dual nationals while others have opted only for the citizenship of their new country.

In this same category I will include Pakistanis belonging to minority faiths – from Christians and Hindus to those belonging to Shia Hazara or Ahmaddiya communities – who were subjected to systematic discrimination by state institutions and government policies, or faced persecution at the hands of the majority community. The already tiny Jewish population had started leaving earlier but the remaining also settled in Western countries or Israel after the 1973 Arab-Israel war. Zoroastrians, who were financially better off compared to other minority communities, have also left Pakistan in large numbers. After being ex-communicated from Islam by the Pakistani Parliament in 1974, a part of the Ahmaddiya community still continues to survive in the country under a hostile social environment. But whoever among them found it feasible to move out decided to leave.

The periodic cycles of violence against those belonging to the Shia sect in Islam and the perpetual cycle of violence against Hazara Shias in Balochistan have encouraged them to leave

Pakistan in significant numbers. But Shias are big in number and entrenched in Pakistan's society, polity and economy. A mass exodus is impossible. But the small community of Hazara Shias in Balochistan live in a very different social and political milieu. Their recognisable facial features make them easy targets for their enemies. Those who are poorer among them try sending out their sons through illegal means.

Unfortunately, the motive for an illegal immigrant in Greece or Germany for a Hazara young man belonging to Quetta is different from a working class Sunni Muslim youth belonging to Lahore. One is running for his life and the other for better economic opportunities. In case of Christians and Hindus, the majority is at the lowest economic tier and can hardly imagine leaving their village or neighbourhood, let alone the country. The affluent among them have a growing tendency to migrate as soon as any such choice is made available to them.

Largely, the people in this second category of Pakistani diaspora belong to multiple tiers of the middle class. Since they were either political dissenters or religiously victimised, they had little choice of their own whether to stay in Pakistan or leave. Some of them got employment or started small businesses if they could afford it but many sought political asylum in their adopted countries. Most of these people live in North America and Europe. They can be found in much smaller numbers in some other countries ranging from Russia to Australia.

Interestingly, we find that most people in this category who continue to take interest in Pakistani political economy and social development have a progressive, democratic and liberal outlook. As individuals or in groups they have formed many associations and organisations in countries where they now live. From 'Committee of Progressive Pakistani Canadians' and 'Literary Forum in North America' to 'Faiz Cultural Foundation' in the UK and 'Alma Foundation' in Norway, there are scores of such organisations across continents. They contribute to promoting Pakistani culture,

art and literature, and try their best to further the discourse that favours democracy and realisation of fundamental rights in Pakistan. Some of them write on issues that we face and others hold thematic public events.

Although, for their next generation, it is more a matter of choice to live in advanced economies and societies rather than a necessity for survival. I believe it is understandable why the generation that was forced to migrate is still emotionally invested in Pakistan. A friend who is a leading physician in Australia and had to leave Pakistan after an attempt on his life for being a Shia told me once: 'Each night when I sleep I find myself treating patients in the General Ward of Civil Hospital Karachi.' An old colleague from Karachi, Christopher Cordero, tells me that had his Christian neighbours not faced baseless allegations of blasphemy, his parents would never have pushed him to migrate to London. He said he could have never imagined leaving the scrumptious kebabs of Burnes Road behind.

Prof Amin Mughal is a political exile in the UK since 1984. He is a progressive public intellectual with global concerns and relishes the cosmopolitan nature of London. Nevertheless, if you happen to take a walk with him while having a discussion on some issue, you will find that Mughal's heart and soul is left behind to stroll on The Mall in Lahore even when physically he is walking on The Strand in London. A journalist who had to leave Pakistan for Norway illegally through Afghanistan and Central Asia said that it is the streets and bazaars of his native city of Gujrat that continue to haunt him in his dreams. He wants to go back but now his children wouldn't allow him. Mughal is an exception but most such people do take trips to Pakistan whenever they find it possible. They also try to keep themselves in contact with assorted left-wing political groups, cultural and language rights organisations, whatever is left of the trade union activity and artists and literati. They also try to support the human rights organisations working in Pakistan. However, if this category of people has to spend the rest of their lives abroad, their involvement in our political and decision-making processes will remain limited. Besides,

the people falling in this category constitute a minority among Pakistani diaspora.

The influential diaspora

The third and the fourth category of diaspora have more similarities than differences when it comes to their choices and outlook towards their native country. What I consider as the third category includes families and extended families who have migrated together mostly to Anglophone countries – from Canada and the US to the UK and Australia – with some moving to other European countries. They have willingly surrendered their Pakistani citizenship and are not dual nationals. They have made a deliberate decision to settle forever in their adopted countries. The reasons have almost always been economic coupled with a desire to live in more stable social conditions. While a large number of them are professionals or businesspersons belonging to middle and upper-middle classes, some rich families have also moved to enjoy day-to-day comfort, avail better health facilities and get quality education for their children in advanced Western countries. The fourth category is similar to the third category as they live, work and settle in their adopted countries forever, raise their families in their new countries and become naturalised citizens of the country of their choice by taking an oath of allegiance to the new homeland. The only difference they have from the third category of diaspora is that they retain their Pakistani citizenship. Therefore, they are dual nationals like some of those who fall in the second category of diaspora described above.

It is the third and fourth category of Pakistani diaspora who have remained most vocal and try to hold sway – even if not decisively – over political matters of their native country. There may well be multiple factors for their influence. Some key reasons, in my view, include:

1. These people form the largest group of permanent diaspora in terms of sheer numbers. Those falling in the first category are temporary diaspora and the second category described above remains a dispersed minority among diaspora.

2. Overall, they have sufficient disposable wealth since many of them are high-end professionals or established businesspersons. Even if they drive cabs or run corner shops, their access to social benefits and subsequently the purchasing power and capacity to make saving is exponentially higher than their counterparts in Pakistan.
3. There are other ethno-nationalist groups from within Pakistan but the biggest number in these two categories come from Punjab, followed by those from Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP). There is a good number of professionals from Sindh, mainly Karachi, in the mix as well. But the majority has migrated from northern Pakistan – Punjab, AJK, KP. Since Punjab has a decisive role to play in Pakistani politics due to its size and dominance, these people remain connected to their influential relations back home.
4. Many from the Potohar region of Punjab, Hazara division or eastern KP districts, and AJK have strong familial bonds with those in military service back home. Due to the military's pre-eminence in Pakistani politics, they find an affinity with power that diaspora from other regions does not enjoy.
5. They largely subscribe to the official religious nature and militarised political narrative of the Pakistani state, which on many occasions may well be in contradiction with the Constitution of Pakistan.
6. The diaspora in these categories is essentially conservative in its outlook when it comes to how they wish to view Pakistan – socially, politically and in ways of dealing with the expanding women's rights movement. This brings them closer to the world view of a significant part of the Pakistani establishment and middle classes in the native country.

The combination of the six key reasons stated above turn those falling in the third and fourth categories of diaspora into what I call 'influential diaspora'. I will now discuss the ideas and worldview of our influential diaspora including how they wish to imagine the country they have left behind. At the outset of this discussion, I should also confess that, to say the least, I find the contradictions in the lives and thinking

of this influential diaspora startling. I must also qualify the ensuing discussion by saying that exceptions are always there to prove the rule. But neither these exceptional outliers among the influential diaspora define their mainstream nor they shape any trends within the communities abroad or in the native country.

Merging the native and religious identity

In 2015, I was in the United States for almost the entire fall season. Although my home-base was the University of Iowa in Iowa City, I was able to travel widely across many states. Besides my speaking assignments and poetry renditions in various places, I got ample opportunity to meet old friends, classmates, former colleagues and my extended family. Through them I could meet many other Pakistanis since most of my family and friends were from Pakistan. I received phenomenal warmth and affection and thoroughly enjoyed myself except for some disturbing trends in the community that I witnessed. Just a few weeks after I had left the US, the fateful terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California, took place claiming at least 14 lives and injuring many more. A young couple of Pakistani origin was responsible in that mass shooting at a Christmas party. Barely six months later, there was a deadlier mass shooting at a night club in Orlando, Florida, in which 49 people died and scores injured. The attacker was a young Afghan man inspired by ISIS. Obviously, these attacks were perpetrated by those belonging to the lunatic fringe and the overwhelming majority of Muslims do not relate to such brutal acts of violence. A small number of Afghan, Arab and Bangladeshi-origin Muslims are equally radicalised as some Pakistanis. But the majority of Pakistanis from our influential diaspora who are completely peaceful in their conduct of business and daily life, are deeply troubled by a persistent confusion about their national and religious identities.

Even after living in the US for decades – many having completed their higher education there as well – Pakistani diaspora in their advanced youth or middle age have acutely

limited social interaction with any other community or race, be they Caucasians, East Asians, Hispanics or African Americans. People from any other community may well be their co-workers but rarely will there be an evening out with a non-Pakistani or any racial intermingling of families. The maximum an average family in Pakistani diaspora will reach out to is Indians, preferably Indian Muslims. Since large families or groups of classmates from professional colleges in Pakistan have moved to North America, it has made possible for these people to ghettoise themselves. The individuals in Pakistani diaspora do not even have Arab friends even after they are keen to Arabise their language and culture, lifestyle and apparel, out of a sheer crisis of identity.

I struck so many conversations on nationalism, faith, identity, and politics with members of our influential diaspora during my longish trip to the US, and did the same on the several subsequent short trips. But let me relate just one such conversation that to an extent represents the nature of other similar conversations. Houston, where I spent a couple of days with an old friend and his family, is home to a large Pakistani community. One morning at the breakfast table, my friend's reasonably educated, smart, well-mannered, and kind wife told me that most of us are incapable of understanding Islam. Even our parents and grandparents did not have a correct knowledge of faith either, she insisted. 'My parents went for Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) twice but their knowledge remained limited. They were totally influenced by the form of Islam which is steeped into Hindu culture.' She then started quoting from the speeches made by some popular professional proselytisers from Pakistan and the US.

Sadly, the example she chose to give me to bring her point home had little to do with any theory or theology. She smiled at me and said: 'See, like you my parents and grandparents always said *Khuda Hafiz* rather than the correct Islamic greeting of *Allah Hafiz*'. Here, for the sake of readers who may not know the distinction, *Khuda* is a Persian word for God while *Allah* is the Arabic word for God. Because the Quran was revealed in Arabic, the Quranic word for God is *Allah*. The

term *Khuda Hafiz* is a Persian greeting used by Muslims from Iran and Afghanistan to all South Asian countries. During the martial rule of General Zia-ul-Haq, it was stressed that we use *Allah Hafiz* instead of *Khuda Hafiz* because *Khuda* could be any God while *Allah* is the God of Muslims. Whatever absurdity you may find in this debate, it did remain an issue for some time in Pakistan. You would be shocked when a random person checked you in public if one used *Khuda Hafiz* as a pleasantry.

Anyway, at that moment, I left my hostess at the breakfast table with a simple question: 'Our parents may have had little knowledge of true Islam, whatever you consider the real and true Islam. They may have not been able to rid themselves completely of the so-called Hindu culture. But please do some research and tell me how the leading religious scholars and revered South Asian Muslims of the 20th century like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Hasrat Mohani used to greet when they bid adieu?'

The woman believed that her own generation is ahead of the previous ones in Pakistan in absorbing the real meaning of Islam through observing what orthodox Arabs she found in the US do and what the contemporary Pakistani proselytisers say. Such women and men in diaspora remain tolerant of differences for the time being but it will be hard to guarantee that their children will not become completely orthodox or may even get radicalised in some instances. Because it all begins with being self-righteous about ourselves and telling our children that we are on the right path and that there is only one right path. Our children of the influential diaspora, both boys and girls, are made to listen to Islamic preachers who demonstrate grossly limited intellect, exhibit painful ignorance, instil fear of burning in hell in young hearts and minds, and continuously 'otherise' every other community of faith. There is little difference between any of the Muslim sects or sub-sects when it comes to exposing children to completely irrational and intolerant ideas in the name of religious teaching. Besides, these children and young people are also made to interact with clerics in their local mosques

and community centres who fight to this day on the sighting of the moon to be able to follow their lunar calendar. No one cares to think that these children are growing up in countries which continue to scale outer space and had first landed on the moon some five decades ago.

Perhaps trivial but I also have an observation about shopping malls from my several long and short trips to Europe and North America over the past many years. A middle-aged Pakistani woman dressed in a regular western or Pakistani attire with no head covering roaming about the mall is likely to be accompanied by her 20-odd years old daughter with a tight Middle Eastern hijab wrapped around her head. Undoubtedly, there is no dearth of 50-year-olds who have imposed upon themselves and their daughters and granddaughters such strict religious codes which were never practised before in their families. Nor are they always practised by their relatives back home. But there are more and more families now with children following stricter codes than their parents. This being a result of those decades of relentless proselytising and preaching and Islamic evangelism their parents exposed them to for fear of them being assimilated in the supposedly libertarian Western culture. There is also a desire among a part of the influential diaspora to claim a universal Muslim identity vis-a-vis a Pakistani identity or in fact merge the two. The 'otherisation' at the hands of the majority community in their adopted countries, particularly after 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks across US and Western Europe, has further helped in nurturing this feeling among the diaspora. Considine also mentions the documentation of hate crimes, discrimination, racial profiling, mosque surveillance, and vandalism in both US and Ireland.

In a way, this desire and effort to merge their religious and previous national identity also amounts to a response to the unity imposed on diaspora through the endorsements of stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists, the assumption of religious homogeneity among Muslims, and the exoticisation of Islam. This issue is insightfully discussed by Nadal et al. in 'Subtle and overt forms of Islamophobia: Microaggressions

toward American Muslims' in 'Journal of Muslim Mental Health' (2012). Therefore, for them being Pakistani is the same as being a pious Muslim. The amalgam becomes their spiritual identity. Simultaneously, they wish to deal with their new identity of the adopted country in more worldly terms.

The biggest contradiction

I wouldn't question the veracity of Considine's research-based argument that the Pakistanis he interviewed in Boston want to be Americans. He says: 'Their understanding of American national identity is based on civic nationalism. These young men identify themselves as members of a community of citizens – unified by a set of democratic ideals – who share citizenship rights and values driven by a liberal political system.' In all likelihood, diaspora of the kind being discussed – barring a few – did not like Donald Trump or leaders of his ilk in the West. His ideas of building a wall along the Mexican border to check Mexicans crossing into the US or placing a temporary ban on immigration from some Muslim countries were considered racist tactics.

From Trump's brand of American conservatism bordering racism to the UK Independence Party to Austrian Freedom Party to National Front in France, there is narrow nationalism at work everywhere in the West. If this stream of thought gains further political popularity, the baser instincts garbed in nationalism will take no time to mutate into outright racism and fascism. If the constituency of hate among people is encouraged either out of political expediency or due to some bigoted ideology, it will bring massive destruction and may lead to genocides and wars. Understandably, our influential diaspora is on the right side when it rejects Trumpism and its different forms in other countries. Because, first and foremost, it also threatens their own existence – life and livelihood – if right-wing political groups prevail in their adopted countries.

But here comes the biggest contradiction. While we find our influential diaspora associating itself with values, platforms, notions and politics that represent inclusion, pluralism,

secularism and democracy in the societies of their adopted countries, they become thoroughly exclusionary, conservative, religious and undemocratic when it comes to their vision for the native country. Many wish Pakistan to become an ideal Islamic country compliant with some orthodox form of Sharia law. Their conception of an ideal Islamic state is rooted in some imagined civilisational nostalgia and is as abstract as it gets.

Over the years, the material and moral support of our influential diaspora to right-wing religious movements, mosques and madrassas in their native country is well known to many. From Tableeghi Jamaat to Tahir-ul-Qadri's Awami Tehreek to Farhat Hashmi's women-focused al-Huda, they believe, like their fellow affluent middle class Pakistanis left behind in the ancestral homeland, that these proselytising movements will contribute to transforming Pakistan into an ideal state and society. How interesting that while our influential diaspora enjoys all rights and liberties enshrined in the constitutions that they owed allegiance to in a modern Western state in which they live, their remains an inherent desire in many of them to see Pakistan as a theocratic state.

A vision marred by paranoia: the example of Malala

There is an uncanny resemblance that one finds in the mindset of the Pakistani affluent middle class and our influential diaspora. When it comes to Pakistan, they reject the concepts of democracy, pluralism, liberal education and fundamental rights. Since these two groups are the most educated and exposed to the outside world, we find Pakistan still struggling to gather a critical mass of intelligentsia that refuses to conform to predetermined ideologies or is able to challenge the oppression that is embedded in official narratives and cultural tradition.

In 2014, soon after Malala Yousafzai became the youngest ever Nobel prize winner, an anti-Malala campaign was

launched in Pakistan not only by the sympathisers of both Afghan and Pakistani Taliban but by both conservative Islamic groups and some who claim to be liberal Pakistani nationalists. Malala came from the Swat valley of KP. We tend to forget today that over ten years ago Taliban were bombing schools among other sites and restraining girls from attending school. Malala began blogging for BBC Urdu as a child and campaigned for girls' education. She was shot by the Taliban as a result, but survived. The Pakistan Army transported her from Swat to Rawalpindi. From there she was taken to be treated at a UK hospital. She lives in the UK with her family since.

The campaign against her in Pakistan was deplorable but at one level understandable because of the divergent views that existed in the country about Taliban being right or wrong vis-a-vis US military action in Afghanistan. The state had encouraged that dichotomy, subtly and not-so-subtly, by allowing a confused debate on mainstream media. But as some of us expected even then, a significant part of the Pakistani influential diaspora declared her a traitor. Most in the influential diaspora joined hands with those in Pakistan who claimed the entire episode was concocted and even questioned Malala getting shot. They declared it a conspiracy against Pakistan and Muslims hatched by no other than Western intelligence agencies. Since most in influential diaspora trust the Pakistani military and see it as the sole protector of both Pakistan and Islam, they simply never thought why an army helicopter was sent to Malala's rescue to bring her from Swat to Rawalpindi? Why was she first treated in a local military hospital before being sent off to the UK for the complicated surgical treatment she needed?

A small personal anecdote here would do no harm. I happened to be in the UK some months after Malala had become a Nobel laureate. One evening I found myself meeting seven people from London and the Midwest. While they were cursing Malala, I was waxing lyrical about her courage and conviction. They remained civil. But my wife's elder cousin could take liberties. He looked me in the eyes

and said: 'You are *azad khayal* (free thinker). I saw a picture of your daughter holding fork in the left hand and knife in the right. That means she would eat with the wrong hand which is forbidden. Why wouldn't you support Malala? I expected as much.' I immediately decided not to argue any further on how this is the norm that you hold your fork in the left hand. Why should one care if someone holds the spoon or fork in any hand she wishes to or likes to eat with her fingers? My poor daughter being mentioned was barely five years old then.

Since a large part of the influential diaspora firmly believes that Malala is working against the interests of Pakistan and Islam, I am not sure how they ever try to resolve within themselves this glaring contradiction: after reaffirming unequivocal allegiance to their adopted countries now and again they believe that Pakistan is under threat by these very countries in which they live apart from India. Because it was the West that recognised Malala's courage and awarded her. Indians lauding her on the side is inconsequential.

Pakistan under constant threat

There is no dearth of conspiracy theories hatched in Pakistan that the diaspora subscribes to or it sometimes comes up with such theories on its own. One being that there is a concerted plan to destabilise and disintegrate Pakistan so that Muslims everywhere are made to suffer. Apparently, the influential diaspora has not unlearned what was taught to them in schools back home and still being propagated in their native country. 'Pakistan is the fortress of Islam. It is the only nuclear power among Muslims nations. Its army is the army of Islam. It should be seen as the custodian of the rights of all Muslims living anywhere in the world'. The liberation of Bangladesh does not seem to bother anyone either. What happened in 1971 is seen simply as an event orchestrated by the Indians. No doubt Indian intervention made matters worse for Pakistan but what the West Pakistani elite did to East Pakistan from 1947 to 1970 is conveniently

erased from memory. The diaspora overlooks that Turkey is more powerful and equipped as far as military strength is concerned. Without even being a nuclear state, it is a member of NATO. Most of the Middle East – from Iran and Bahrain to UAE and Saudi Arabia – is far richer than Pakistan. Economically and in terms of international influence, these countries outweigh Pakistan on all counts. How can we actually compare their wealth with our poverty? Countries like Malaysia and Indonesia are far ahead of us in manufacturing, commerce and trade. Many other Muslim majority countries can very well imagine to pursue a much greater cause for the protection and wellbeing of Muslims.

To me another phenomenon also warrants interest. Our influential diaspora, even after having left Pakistan deliberately because they knew that it is constrained by underdevelopment, somehow believe in that theory of uniqueness and exclusivity of Pakistan in the comity of nations like some of their native cousins back home. I constantly hear from a number of acquaintances and classmates who form a part of this diaspora how some nefarious plans are at work against Pakistan. They share a combination of real and fake news on social media platforms and sensational material that presents a doomsday scenario for the country due to international intrigues. They urge that something extraordinary is needed to be done to prevent our total destruction. As said earlier, to them the world is out there to decimate Pakistan. But we hear the same from many of our defence analysts, who always happen to be retired military officers, on television screens day in and day out. But what is so special about us? Why does the rest of the world feel either envious or fearful? Were we ever an empire? Have we developed some sophisticated technology that will shake the foundations of the world of modern warfare? What a pity that we have been unable to expand the railway network the British left us. But we have the gall to believe that those sending space probes to Mars and Jupiter are concentrating their efforts to pull us down.

Longing for a messiah

Our influential diaspora has not only supported religious bigotry in their native state, as mentioned above, they have also supported the military dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008) and conservative civilian rules. Their understanding of Pakistan remains similar to their counterparts' in the affluent, urban middle-class residing within Pakistan. Since democracy to them is dispensable because of the unique nature of the country, a messiah is needed to fix all that is wrong. Remaining within the confines of religion, the slogan of 'enlightened moderation' also attracted them due to the circumstances they were living in. Two years into Musharraf's power, they witnessed 9/11 and were soon being bracketed with extremists and sympathisers of terrorists in their adopted countries. Psychologically, Musharraf's mantra brought them some relief. They could tell each other and those belonging to other communities that Pakistan is modernising without compromising its religious bearings. Fortunately for Musharraf, Osama Bin Laden was traced three years after he had left power because he had consistently denied Bin Laden's existence within Pakistan's territory. Those in diaspora trusted him. My friend Zulfiqar Ali, a human rights defender, ideologically left of centre and an old supporter of the Labour Party in the UK, told me during Musharraf's period: 'What Musharraf is doing is what Pakistan needs at this juncture. Perhaps, the country is not ready for democracy because all you guys ever elect are corrupt and incompetent leaders.'

Musharraf's hoodwinking the Americans – both his benefactors and beneficiaries – in the war on terror, his double-game with 'good and bad Taliban', adhoc economic policies, and the farce of liberalism landed us in a bigger mess than before. The internal strife in Pakistan increased, terror outfits prevailed, civil unrest in Balochistan province began afresh, and thousands of Pakistani civilians, police and military personnel lost their lives. But at the time of his leaving, by virtue of both leaders of two mainstream political parties being kept away from Pakistan for years, another

possible messiah appeared in the imagination of a certain segment of middle class in Pakistan as well as the influential diaspora – Imran Khan.

A cult was meticulously created around Khan's personal integrity, incorruptibility, sincerity of purpose, and, above all, about him being a reborn devout Muslim. The influential diaspora supported him tooth and nail. After Musharraf, he was the new knight in shining armour. His rhetoric, built around debasing all his political opponents and branding them cheats and thieves, resonated heavily with influential diaspora. His claims of turning Pakistan into Sweden by creating an Islamic welfare state won their hearts. He was embraced by them like none ever before. His status of being a cricket star and a handsome Pakistani playboy who courted so many white Western women were seen as his conquests. Of course, until he turned to his faith and decided to create the state of Medina in Pakistan by coming to power. They adored him and they funded him.

I know many from the diaspora with dual citizenship who bought air tickets to come to Pakistan in 2013 and 2018 to canvass for Khan's party candidates during the general elections. Some spent money just to come to Pakistan at the time of elections to cast votes in their ancestral constituencies. In Pakistan, political parties are not allowed to raise foreign funding to run their electoral campaigns. But Khan's PTI is being scrutinised for receiving huge sums of money from abroad by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Whether the case is decided in their favour or not, its very existence confirms that the diaspora was involved in sponsoring his campaign.

In 2018, Khan's PTI was brought to power in Pakistan after an election considered grossly manipulated by many independent observers and a section of media. They allege, along with other major political parties, that the military sided with Khan and intelligence agencies wooed or coerced many candidates who had a strong chance to get elected to join Khan's party. Soon after the elections, a dear friend and

relative who had come from Canada for Khan's campaign told me: 'Finally, we are in power. Khan will now hang all corrupt politicians and cleanse Pakistan of those who are like termite. He will turn the economy around and we will become proud of being Pakistani in Canada.'

Unfortunately, this is not happening. Khan's government has not delivered on any count. On the contrary, the economic performance is dismal, we are faced with hyperinflation and unemployment like never in the past 30 years, foreign debt has increased manifold, the foreign policy when it comes to any of our neighbours or in general is least impressive, and indicators of good governance are at an all-time low. India has effectively annexed Kashmir which was a long-standing disputed territory with Pakistan not being able to do anything substantial in response. To compound our grief, the Covid-19 pandemic has hit us.

The influential diaspora – since it is not affected by what is happening on the ground – still insists that one day there will be a miraculous recovery of Pakistan's economy and global image. But will it be cheeky of me to ask them why they did not contemplate returning to Pakistan to support Khan's agenda or why those who could afford refrained from making any mentionable financial investments into Pakistan's economy when it needed it the most?

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the Pakistani influential diaspora – particularly the first and second generation of migrants – has a lingering religious and nationalistic identity conundrum in its adopted countries. However, barring a few on the lunatic fringe who resort to violence, the bulk of the diaspora are law abiding citizens in their new habitats. The diaspora instinctively safeguards its personal and communal interests and tries to reap benefits from the multiculturalism that is promoted in those societies even in the wake of heightened tensions due to the emergence of political Islam. They feel safer in their adopted states because those democratic states

protect human rights of their citizens.

When it comes to the native country, those belonging to our influential diaspora embark on an idealist adventure to help create a state and society which is based on the purity of their religious faith and the glorification of an imagined past. It is ironic that the democratic, secular, plural and inclusive values that make them feel safe and allow them and their families to grow and prosper in their lives and careers in their adopted countries are considered by them to be unsuitable for the native country. They believe, profess and support authoritarianism and right-wing populism in Pakistan. This is a confusion worst confounded.

Note: The academic and journalistic sources consulted include Elizabeth Mavroudi's entry on 'Diaspora' in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (2020), Craig Considine's book *Islam, Race, and Pluralism in the Pakistani Diaspora* (Routledge, 2018), and "Subtle and overt forms of Islamophobia: Microagressions toward Muslim Americans" by Nadal et al. in *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 6, no. 2 (2012). Besides I have drawn upon my own op-ed columns published in The News International between 2013 and 2016 and reminiscences of my visits to Europe and North America between 2002 and 2019. The lines from Moniza Alvi's poem, *The Country at My Shoulder*, are published in her 1993 collection named after this very poem.

Notes on Contributors and Editors

Salman Asif is an author, playwright, documentary filmmaker and a Culture, Gender Equality and Human Rights expert. He has worked as an international Advisor for UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Women and UNDP. His documentary *Whose Honour is this Anyway?* explored the issue of violence against women in the name of honour and his book *Razia: The Warrior Queen of India,* has been drawn from as a learning tool for schools in the UK and Pakistan. Asif has written extensively in English, Hindi and Urdu and continues to be an active campaigner for voice, visibility, and agency of most marginalized groups. Salman Asif divides his time between Islamabad and London.

Zahida Hina is among the best known Urdu fiction writers. She is also an essayist, columnist and dramatist. She has published eleven books including novels, novella and short-story collections. Her fiction has been translated into English, Hindi, Bengali and Marathi. Poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz is among one of her translators. She has written thousands of columns in newspapers besides working as an editor and a broadcast journalist in Pakistan and abroad. Zahida Hina has received many awards including the Literary Performance Award, Faiz Award and Saghar Siddiqui Award.

Fatimah Ihsan is an academic, cross-sectoral gender expert and feminist researcher. She has worked in Pakistan and US with leading civil society organizations and development funding agencies. She currently teaches at the Gender Studies department of the Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.

Harris Khalique is a leading Urdu and English language poet and essayist. He has nine collections of verse, two books of non-fiction, and hundreds of articles, essays and columns published nationally and internationally. A University of Iowa Honorary Fellow in Writing, his work is translated into several languages. He has also worked with citizens' organisations, labour and human rights movements across Pakistan, South Asia and Europe. He is a recipient of the President's Award for Pride of Performance and the UBL Literary Excellence Award.

Irfan Ahmad Khan is a researcher and development practitioner based in Karachi. His interests range from history and literature to human rights and social change. In a career spanning some 25 years, he has worked on various community development projects, providing design, research and evaluation services. He has been a volunteer and a consultant with several national and international organizations and professional associations.

Dr Naazir Mahmood is an educationist, columnist, translator, and film critic who writes regularly for English and Urdu dailies. He has published two collections of articles titled *Politics, Pictures and Personalities* (2018) and *An Alternative History* (2019). He is currently working as academic advisor to Headstart School in Islamabad and as editorial consultant with The News International. He is also a prominent political and social policy analyst on Pakistan's primetime television.

Navid Shahzad is an academic, author, actor and director. Her recent book *Aslan's Roar: Turkish Television and the Rise of the Muslim Hero* is an extensive study of Turkish popular culture and the increasing international popularity of Turkish *dizis*. She is the recipient of Pakistan's prestigious Pride of Performance Award for Literature, the Fatima Jinnah Award for Artistic Excellence as well as Gold and Silver medals for her contribution to the performing arts. As Associate Professor, she taught drama and poetry for thirty years at the University of Punjab before pioneering Pakistan's first liberal arts university known as the Beaconhouse National University where as Dean, School

of Liberal Arts, she set up the country's first department of Theatre, Film and TV. She was subsequently designated Distinguished Professor of Dramatic Arts. She is currently the Academic Advisor for the Lahore Grammar School system.

Hasan Zaidi is an award-winning filmmaker and journalist, a festival director and a cultural critic. He has been Editor Magazines at Dawn, Pakistan's leading daily English newspaper, since 2016. He contributes to premier international news publications and has worked for print as well as electronic media including TV, radio and digital. He has directed a critically acclaimed feature film as well as a number of short films and documentaries. He was nominated in 2003 by the World Economic Forum as one of 100 Global Leaders for Tomorrow and has won three awards for journalistic excellence from the All Pakistan Newspapers Society.

Seven of Pakistan's most dynamic, forward-looking, and erudite people with obvious commitment to making the country a stable, peaceful, and happy place to live in for future generations have contributed to this book. The subjects they have chosen are diverse: cultural confusion (Hasan Zaidi), religious minorities as represented in films (Salman Asif), the theme of exile in Hikmet and Faiz (Navid Shahzad), the plurality in our Sufi tradition (Fatimah Ihsan), the discriminatory and exclusionary educational system (Naazir Mahmood), the role of religion in our history (Zahida Hina) and the political obsession of the Pakistani diaspora to support authoritarian and populist rulers (Harris Khalique). The purpose, despite this diversity of disciplines, is the same: how to use our critical intelligence to point out where, and in how many ways, our decision-makers went wrong. And, more importantly, how these insights can help us find solutions to the problems which surround us.

– Tariq Rahman, Ph. D, D. Litt. (Sheffield)
Linguist, Language Historian and Author, National Distinguished Professor

Pakistan Here and Now is an important intervention in the cultural and social story of Pakistan, in that it creates a crucial space for interrogating difference, diversity, contradictions and complexity in a critical framework that is neither frozen in time, nor agnostic of the country's layered history. The book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand Pakistan's ideological journey embedded in a contextualised struggle with notions of inclusive cultural and political identity, and the challenge of constructed narratives that block critical thinking so essential for open societies. The essays speak to different subjects but are thematically linked in their deconstruction of the politics of fixed constructs. The identification of historical nodes through which cultural expression could have or still has, creatively addressed the problem of exclusivist discourses and competing narrative is also a dominant thread giving coherence to the project quite literally, making sense of who we are, what we have become and who we can be.

– Senator Sherry Rehman
Chair, Jinnah Institute

This volume of essays provides profound insights into contemporary Pakistani society, culture, arts, identity issues, and the multi-faceted wretchedness the people of this land have had to suffer since long at the hands of a small powerful elite. All seven contributors seem to share a common argument: that no single event of history happens in vacuum. There is a continuum. Even the nature and significance of a minor incident cannot be precisely grasped in isolation. These essays stress that from cultural confusion to politics of exclusion to othering to all forms of extremism to obscurantism to identity issues being faced at home and abroad by Pakistanis, are manifestations of a kind of an epistemic consistency prioritised by colonial and postcolonial power structures. Going for their distinctive, sometimes personal, experiential way to describe the epistemic consistency, every writer has employed progressive, human-centred, postcolonial, emancipatory perspective. All these writings dare to challenge with scholarly rigour legion of popular and state narratives about identity, culture, nation, and arts. Written in lucid, eloquent, candid style, these writings exhibit fecund yet resolute intellect of their writers. A must-read book indeed.

– Nasir Abbas Nayyar, PhD
Author and Critic, Professor, Punjab University Oriental College, Lahore

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