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Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies

Volume 1, Number 1, June 2009

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Editorial

Welcome to *Pakistaniaat*—*Chishm-e-ma Roshan* *Dil-e-ma Shaad*

Even as these lines are written, Pakistan is involved in a struggle for its very survival against fanatics who claim to understand the mind of God and who have sullied Islam's traditional image of love and compassion by replacing it with hatred, violence, and torture.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Pakistan is valued only within the context of its possible instrumentalization for US foreign policy. Opinions about Pakistan rely heavily on crude stereotypes and are often declarative rather than being reflective. Just a few weeks ago, for example, congressman Gary Ackerman declared: "Pakistan's pants are on fire!" Unfortunately, when it comes to Pakistan, ignorance isn't just the hallmark of the Pakistani Taliban; it also permeates US politics and media.

Why start a journal about Pakistan? Perhaps because, in the spirit of Fanon, we feel that there are too many inane things being said about Pakistan, things posited as naturally axiomatic and normative when they are neither. We say in Urdu, mullah ki dor masjid tak (a mullah runs only as far as the mosque), and as academics our remedy to this normalized ignorance is to do something academic that enables and encourages a more nuanced and scholarly engagement with Pakistan. *Pakistaniaat*, thus, is an outcome of this attempt at giving voice to otherwise silenced voices.

Pakistaniaat is to be a free on-line journal, openly available to its readers. Furthermore, it offers more than academic articles and book reviews. The journal is inspired by the model set forth by *Postcolonial Text*, an esteemed and established open-access journal in the field of postcolonial studies.

We were aware, at the outset of *Pakistaniaat's* inception, that online journals are still somehow considered less academic and authentic as compared to their print counterparts. We think that, with the quality of contributions to the first of what we hope will be many issues, we may dismiss that notion. We exist to bring the work of dedicated academics, essayists, fiction writers, and poets, whose work is related to Pakistan in one way or another, to a global audience.

Our journal is hosted by Scholarly Exchange, a non-profit that provides affordable access to Open Journal Systems (OJS) software, which is, in our opinion,

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the best software for online scholarly publication. We have also made arrangements with a print-on-demand company to make print copies of the journal available to all those who would want a physical copy of the journal.

Our all-volunteer team has worked exceptionally hard to bring this first issue to you. Special thanks to Deborah Hall, Sarah Husain, David Waterman, Jana Russ, and Yousaf Alamgirian, co-editors, and Jason W. Ellis, our layout editor. We are also fortunate to have the technical support of Audra and Mike of karmacms.com, who made it possible for us to launch the first journal website in less than a day. I am also personally indebted to my department chair, Ron Cortshell, who—despite the tough economic conditions—provided the initial financial support.

We look forward to submissions, possibly from you, for our future issues. We also hope to enjoy your general support in whatever way you deem it fit to give us.

Enjoy reading this first ever issue of *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies*.

Masood Ashraf Raja
May 12, 2009.

Introducing the Urdu Short Story in Translation¹

By Muhammad Umar Memon

An Indo-European language, Urdu developed soon after Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna's incursions from present-day war-torn Afghanistan into northern India early in the eleventh century. It is written in the Perso-Arabic script and borrows a significant portion of its literary vocabulary from Arabic, Persian and Turkish. A language of high literary refinement, Urdu is spoken by easily a few hundred million people, chiefly in India, where it is one of the official languages; Pakistan, where it is the national language; and in Western countries with sizeable South Asian expatriate or émigré populations, such as the UK and Canada. Although more people know it than the combined speakers of Arabic, Persian and Turkish, little is known about its literary culture. The reasons are simple enough: Although every bit an Indian language in which not just Muslims but also Hindus and Sikhs participated from its beginnings, it has now become inextricably identified with the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent alone, at least since the Partition of India in 1947. This historically misleading and politically motivated conflation of a language with a religious community has led to its marginalization in academic and popular discourses on the subcontinent. On the other hand, Arabs from the Atlantic coast of Africa to the Gulf states, who constitute perhaps fifteen to twenty per cent of the total Muslim population of over 1.5 billion worldwide, identify themselves quite self-consciously as the primary custodians, arbiters and spokesmen of all that stands for Islam and Muslim culture, unaffected by the exuberance of non-Arab expressions in the creative arts. The same close association is validated in the popular imagination across the world perhaps due to the ineluctable force of oil politics in our time. Urdu has had a vibrant literary tradition. However, the creative heart of this tradition has historically been predisposed towards poetry. Since its pre-eminent literary forms and conventions have been mostly borrowed from Arabic and Persian, which stand out for assigning relatively little value to mimesis in the production of imaginative literature, poetry has had to carry the main thrust of all creative art. One could even say that, historically, in Muslim cultures, 'literature'—or belles lettres—stands overwhelmingly for 'poetry,' as though the two were interchangeable terms. In that culture, prose, conversely, had been reserved from the

earliest times for the expression of formal thought and the travails of discursive reason. Although a smattering of prose works did exist, these can only loosely be described as fictional in nature. Prose literature—particularly fiction, if the term can be applied at all—was predominantly oral in the premodern period, i.e. before the mid-nineteenth century, and consisted of the *dastans*—enormous anonymous story cycles recited in public by professional tellers and committed to writing only in the nineteenth century. Radically different in worldview from that of the post-Renaissance West, this form harked back to a different fictional poetics and it had different concerns underlying its production. But fiction as it is understood in the West did not appear in Urdu until well into the nineteenth century, and that too as a by-product of colonial rule. The novel came first, in the middle and latter part of the century, but only in the sense of formalistic rudiments. This early—or proto—novel, is most clearly represented in the works of Nazir Ahmad (1831-1912) and Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar's (1845-1903) voluminous *Fasaana-e Azaad*, a conglomeration of episodes originally conceived as a serial for the newspaper *Avadh Akhbar*. It was not until 1899, however, that the first recognizably modern novel made its appearance in Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa's *Umrao Jan Ada* (named after a fictitious Lucknow courtesan; now available in at least two English translations). The short story, on the other hand, arrived roughly a quarter of a century later. It emerged as a discrete narrative form only in the work of Munshi Premchand (1880-1936) around the turn of the twentieth century. But Premchand, except for a few works completed towards the end of his life, wrote more out of a need to push an agenda of social reform than from any concern for the individual as an autonomous entity flung across history and culture, but more importantly across the changing landscapes of their own tortured and tortuous psyche. Still less did he concern himself with the notion that literature enjoyed an autonomy and a mode of being all its own.

The same spirit pervades the bulk of fictional work produced under the aegis of the Progressive Writers' Movement, founded in 1936. In their desire to break free from British colonial rule and establish an economically just society along Marxist lines, the members of this movement bypassed, for the most part, fiction's great potential for probing into realms beyond those offered by their immediate socioeconomic reality. The fictional output of this period was rigidly circumscribed by the authorial notion of the short story then common in the literary canon. The emphasis was increasingly on social reality—though not social reality as a whole, only certain elements of it such as the unequal distribution of wealth, exploitation of the individual by the moneyed classes, disregard of the individual's personality and desires out of religious considerations, etc.—to the growing exclusion of the individual as a being poised precariously between history and desire.

While staunch Progressives such as Sajjad Zaheer (d. 1973), Krishan Chandar (d. 1977) and Ismat Chughtai (d. 1991)—to name only a few—churned out story after story according to a formula forged in the crucible of Marxist ideology, independents such as Ahmed Ali (d. 1994) of *Twilight in Delhi* fame, Saadat Hasan Manto (d. 1955), Urdu's greatest and most accomplished short story writer and Muhammad Hasan Askari (d. 1978)—again to mention only a few—chose to break away from the paradigmatic stranglehold of the Progressive ideology and pursue the elusive and shimmering world of individual consciousness.

The two decades between the birth of the Progressives in 1936 and the demise of their Movement in the 1950s may be considered the most propitious period for the development of Urdu fiction. In that period the short story, for instance, broadened its thematic horizon to include not just the external but also the intensely personal, and showed an increasing openness to technical innovation. More than anything else, it ensured a decisive break from the residual elements of the *dastan* that still flickered unsuspectingly in the fictional production of the time. Alongside the didactic and socially motivated agenda, which remained the hallmark of much of the Progressive writing of the period, one can see, primarily among the nonaligned writers, the use of the short story as a form fully aware of its inherent potential for the discovery and articulation of realities beyond the external and the social. The meandering propensity for technical innovation entered a more daring, if sometimes aesthetically perilous phase, in the sixth decade of the last century. This modern product may be best described by the term 'post-realist', in that it inaugurated the final collapse of the familiar space between the writer's persona and the reader. Here all the spatial and temporal coordinates are often rigidly withheld in order to present experience in its pristine essence, without any kind of mediation or comment.

The developments in Urdu literary production both in India and Pakistan since 1947 have evolved along pretty much the same lines, except that, where fiction is concerned, Indian Urdu writers show a greater propensity for innovation, daring and independence of will. The traditional poetic form of the *ghazal* (loosely, a lyric), eclipsed briefly by the *nazm* (poem) during the heyday of the Progressive Writers (1936-50), has reclaimed its turf, but without any attempt to smother the growth of other forms, especially that of the *na'i nazm* (new poetry), which began in a concerted manner in India in the late 1950s and quickly assumed the dimensions of a significant literary movement.

Prose fiction too has moved away from, or at least become wary, of its earlier dependence on external reality and a linear treatment of plot, though these characteristics still persist in the works of many writers. Contemporary output offers a

more nuanced and complex treatment of the fictional subject, and is characterized by a more aggressive mobilization of different narrative techniques.

Looking at Urdu literary production over the last 150 years, one immediately notices two major facts: one, while there has been no dearth of good poets in this period, there have been very few who approach the originality and virtuosity of Ghalib (d. 1869) and Mir (d. 1810), the only exceptions being Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) and, strictly in terms of popularity, the Lenin Peace Prize laureate Faiz Ahmed Faiz (d. 1984); and two, the period is incontestably dominated by prose fiction. While the list of Urdu fiction writers in the last hundred years is fairly long, the more famous among the Pakistani writers who have received wide critical acclaim would be: Abdullah Hussein, Altaf Fatima, Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi, Asad Muhammad Khan, Ashfaq Ahmad, Aziz Ahmad, Bano Qudsia, Enver Sajjad, Fahmida Riaz, Farkhunda Lodhi, Ghulam Abbas, Hajira Masrur, Hasan Manzar, Intizar Husain, Jameela Hashmi, Khadija Mastur, Khalida Husain, Muhammad Mansha Yaad, Mumtaz Mufti, Mumtaz Shirin, Quadratullah Shahab, Qurratulain Hyder, Razia Fasih Ahmad, Saadat Hasan Manto, Shaukat Siddiqi, Zahida Hena and Zamiruddin Ahmad.² The literary career of some of these writers actually started before the creation of Pakistan, and in the case of Qurratulain Hyder, followed along a serpentine trajectory. She was already active as a writer in India before its 1947 split. She then migrated to Pakistan, where in 1959 she wrote her most controversial and technically most innovative and accomplished novel *Aag ka Darya* (River of Fire). In the decade of the 1960s Hyder decided to migrate back to India, where before her death in 2007 she was still actively engaged in the writing career that had started some sixty years ago. From what we read these days in our print media or watch on our television sets about Pakistani women, we are unlikely to associate any creativity—except perhaps procreativity—with them. Frightening images of unmitigated repression and abuse, including rape and murder, and suffocating seclusion behind the mobile death-tents of the burqa, daily impinge on our consciousness and disallow any happier and more constructive role in society for them. Yet the simple fact is that women have been involved in the field of literature right from the start. The small inventory of names offered above includes several women writers. Altaf Fatima, Bano Qudsia, Fahmida Riaz (who also happens to be a first-rate feminist poet³), Farkhunda Lodhi, Hajira Masrur, Jameela Hashmi, Khadija Mastur, Khalida Husain, Mumtaz Shirin, Qurratulain Hyder, Razia Fasih Ahmad and Zahida Hena are not just women writers, they are accomplished writers. And if one were to judge on the basis of sheer volume and quality, Qurratulain Hyder is arguably the finest Urdu fiction writer.

*

Not all Pakistanis are fundamentalists. Indeed most are not. They are affected, like people everywhere, by common human emotions. They love, hate, feel jealousy and sympathy. They fall in love and make love. They are capable of exceptional kindness, just as they are capable of exceptional brutality. But regrettably, this is not how Pakistanis are shown in the media, especially since the tragic event of 11 September 2001 and many other similar episodes occurring within India itself. *Do You Suppose It's the East Wind?* is offered against just this essentializing tendency in order to restore our semblance in the *other*; to give some idea, however imperfect and tentative, of the range and breadth of their preoccupations and concerns, and of the emotions that propel them through the joyous and often equally painful business of living. The semblance may be easily retrievable in some of the stories that appear here, elusive in others. After all cultures differ, as do our responses to common stimuli. But there can be little doubt that Pakistanis do read, appreciate and create literature, just as do people elsewhere in South Asia and the West, and *that* literature offers many facets of our complex human existence.

Abdullah Hussein, who has written extensively about the feeling of exile and alienation and its devastations, revisits it again in his 'Sunlight'. He brings the exiled Saeed home after twenty long years, and readers smile an unconscious smile of satisfaction with Saeed when he overcomes his initial feeling of 'familiarity and foreignness' to finally step out into the refreshing spring rain of the city, his city, to seek out and visit old acquaintances.

Saadat Hasan Manto's 'For Freedom's Sake' is not just a story of how perfectly decent human beings are stunted and flawed when forced to suppress their natural physical desire, it is also a veiled critique of Mahatma Gandhi for his quite inhuman demand from his followers to sacrifice the joys of physical union in the name of national liberation from colonial rule.

The title story of the collection, 'Do You Suppose It's the East Wind?' by Altaf Fatima, reveals, even to the reader who knows nothing about the 1947 Partition of British India, the deep and abiding sense of personal loss felt by those Muslims and Hindus who, before the Partition, had developed bonds of familial affection that were forever severed when forces beyond their control forced them apart. As the East Wind blows, which is believed to reopen old wounds in the individual and revive memories long buried under the dust of time, a Muslim woman, presumably now in Pakistan, thinks about a Hindu boy, her playmate back when she lived in India. That she is still unmarried and goes through life without much élan or enthusiasm reveals the emotion that remains unvoiced in the story itself, an emotion stifled in its infancy and becoming intelligible only in adulthood. 'The Lure of Music' by Ghulam Abbas might present some difficulty to a non-South Asian reader. For one thing, the author is a master of extreme understatement and sugges-

tion, for another, this story, more than any other, requires considerable knowledge of South Asian Muslim society. In the story the reader follows along with amused chagrin as a hardworking husband and father leads his innocent wife and daughters down roads and into neighbourhoods they might have hoped never to see, after his long-suppressed love for music is reawakened on his way home late one evening when the gentle sound of a sarod fills his ears. But the true intensity of his sacrifice cannot be fully appreciated without some knowledge of the status of musicians and courtesan culture.

The Partition of India left a trail of blood in its wake. Its devastations, hard on all victims, were hardest on women. For religious reasons, a Hindu woman, if she survived her abduction and rape by Muslims at all, was not welcomed back into her own family. She thus suffered twice—first the violation of her body and then the indignity of lifelong rejection. While the notion of religious defilement did not apply in the case of a Muslim woman's rape, she too suffered its ill effects due to social and cultural practices. In 'Banished', writer Jameela Hashmi focuses poignantly on another dimension of this violence. Here, a Muslim woman held by her Sikh captor has the opportunity to return to her family across the border when soldiers come looking for abducted women to take them to their new country—but she chooses not to go. What is holding her back? Her children, of course, especially a daughter, conceived during her captivity. She did not wish for the birth of these children, but they are here, along with subterranean bonds that are hard to break. 'Love', she balefully reflects, 'finds new crutches'. Her suffering is endless.

In a lighter vein, some readers might wonder how anyone could write a story about mangoes, but before long they too become caught up in the excitement, in Abul Fazl Siddiqi's description in 'Gulab Khas', of the cutthroat national competition, held only once in five years, for the best 'new and improved' mango variety. The young, beautiful commoner, Sundariya, is convinced to put her Gulab Khas up against the excellent entries of the rich and powerful plantation owners with surprising and amusing and even shocking results. Ikramullah's 'Regret' is a stark and heart-wrenching portrayal of the death of burgeoning idealism. Ostensibly a story of two childhood friends, it vividly recalls, with wistfulness and compassion, the life of a city in East Punjab in what was once colonial India. The hunger and sacrifices of its population for independence, the tense atmosphere of the days just before Independence, when the population was precariously balanced between hope and despair, the unimaginable massacres that followed in the wake of Partition and ripped apart the communal harmony of this quiet city—all are described here with the admirable surety of artistic touch of a master story writer of contemporary Pakistan.

Well-known Pakistani feminist poet Fahmida Riaz takes readers on a visit to Kazakhstan when she turns to prose in her ‘Pink Pigeons—Was it They Who Won?’ The visit brings back memories of a onetime neighbour, Mulla Yusuf Ziai, whose paternal grandfather was a native of Kazakhstan. Through her often amusing memories, the narrator of the story manages, painlessly and almost unawares, to introduce readers to the complicated politics of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the former Soviet Republics. But at the subterranean level, this story also reveals the complicated forces at work in its narrator’s psyche. She discovers, with pleasant surprise, that despite all her education and freedom and feminism, she can ill afford a comparison with her children’s middle-aged Pathan nanny Bibi Jan in matters of freedom of the spirit, independence of mind and the needs of the flesh.

In ‘The Drizzle’, Hasan Manzar leaves it to his readers to answer the lingering question of whether Minachi, the Ceylonese Tamil Hindu girl who comes to wash clothes, did or did not actually steal the new gold locket Miss Kamariya had purchased after much sacrifice and which she had looked forward to wearing when she visited home for Eid. But in any event, the finger is pointed at Minachi and she must suffer the rejection and disdain of those around her more because of what she is than because of anything she may have done.

Trying to make sense of today’s news stories about clan rivalries and local warlords in the regions of north Pakistan and Afghanistan becomes a bit less difficult after reading Asad Muhammad Khan’s ‘Ma’i Dada’. Here readers meet Abdul Majid Khan Yusuf Zai—now known to the whole town as Ma’i Dada—whose favourite threat was that he would rip out someone’s guts and hang them around his neck! Ma’i Dada shows himself to be a true example of Pathan pride and temper, never mind that the rumours about his real ancestry prove true.

In Ashfaq Ahmad’s ‘Havens’, readers are drawn unawares into another story dealing with the deeply troubling reality of India’s Partition in 1947 when memories of his son Asif flood through the mind of an old veteranian waiting to cash a cheque. As the old man continually thinks ‘if only’, it gradually becomes clear that Asif has been killed and the old man realizes it is now too late to be the kind of father he should have been.

The central character in Javed Shahin’s ‘If Truth be Told’ is on his way to Sultan Bahu’s shrine because, while on one of her visits, his mother has left his home following a tiff with his wife, not an unusual occurrence, and she was yet to be found twenty days later. He himself does not believe in such things, but recalls how much his mother loved to visit saints’ shrines. Not finding her there, he nevertheless feels tremendous relief after admitting to himself the real reason he is going through the motions of searching.

The loneliness of a South Asian exile living in London, who claims to like solitude, is unmasked in Tasadduq Sohail's strongly autobiographical 'The Tree', when readers learn that the man's eyes 'involuntarily spilled their cargo of tears' after he finally located the remains of 'his' rather spunky talking tree that had been felled by a violent wind storm while he was away. Two final points need to be touched on. Pakistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic society. Easily half a dozen languages are spoken across its length and breadth, with some of them, especially Sindhi and Punjabi, boasting of quite robust literary traditions. Urdu—which is not specific to any one region of the country and which is the mother tongue of only a small minority of mainly Indian Muslims who migrated there after 1947—continues to be the most widely understood and spoken language, and it also has the longest tradition of short story writing of any other Pakistani language.

Secondly, this collection lays no claim to being definitive or comprehensive or even representative. It cannot be. For every writer included, easily half a dozen equally important authors had to be left out, for instance Intizar Husain and Zamiruddin Ahmad, to name just two. The ambition of this collection is fairly modest: To present a glimpse of Pakistanis in the act of living.

Notes:

¹This essay has been adapted from the "Introduction to Urdu Short Stories," *Do You Suppose It's the East Wind: Stories from Pakistan*, Translated from Urdu by Muhammad Umar Memon. The collection to be published by Penguin Books (India) in June 2009.

²A partial listing of the works of these writers, as well as some Indian Urdu writers, available in English would include: Ghulam Abbas, *Hotel Moenjodaro and Other Stories*, tr. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin Books, India, 1996); Aziz Ahmad, *The Shore and the Wave*, tr. Ralph Russell (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971); Altaf Fatima, *The One Who Did Not Ask*, tr. Rukhsana Ahmad (Oxford: Heinemann, 1993); Intizar Husain, *The Seventh Door and Other Stories*, ed. and with an introduction by Muhammad Umar Memon (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Abdullah Hussein, *Stories of Exile and Alienation*, tr. Muhammad Umar Memon (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), *The Weary Generations*, tr. by the author (London: Peter Owen, 1999); Qurratulain Hyder, *River of Fire*, transcreated by the author (New York: New Directions, 1998); Saadat Hasan Manto, *Kingdom's End and Other Stories*, tr. Khalid Hasan (London: Verso, 1987); Shaukat Siddiqi, *God's Own Land: A Novel of Pakistan*, tr. David J. Matthews (UK:

Paul Norbury Publications/UNESCO, 1991); Ismat Chughtai, *The Crooked Line*, tr. Tahira Naqvi (Oxford: Heinemann, 1995); Naiyer Masud, *Essence of Camphor*, tr. Muhammad Umar Memon and others (New York: The New Press, 2000), *Snake Catcher*, tr. Muhammad Umar Memon (Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2005).

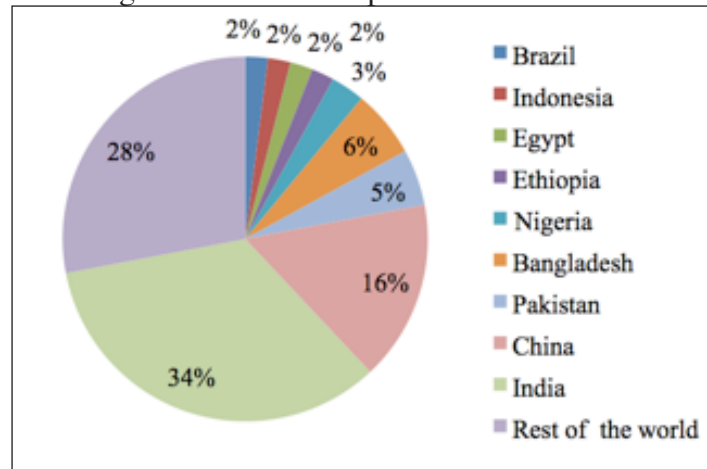
³ For a sampling of Fahmida Riaz's poetry and that of some other feminist poets, see *We Sinful Women: Contemporary Urdu Feminist Poetry*, tr. and ed. Rukhsana Ahmad (London: The Women's Press, 1991).

Community Learning Center Programs and Community Literacy Development in Asian and the Pacific Countries: Bangladesh, Iran, Vietnam and Pakistan as Case Studies

By Akbar Zolfaghari, Mohammad Shatar Sabran, and Ali Zolfaghari

Worldwide, 750 million adults are illiterate. It is alarming to note that around 625 million illiterate adults live in Asian and the Pacific Countries, while 113 million children have no chance of attending school. Figure 1 shows the percentages of illiteracy across the world.

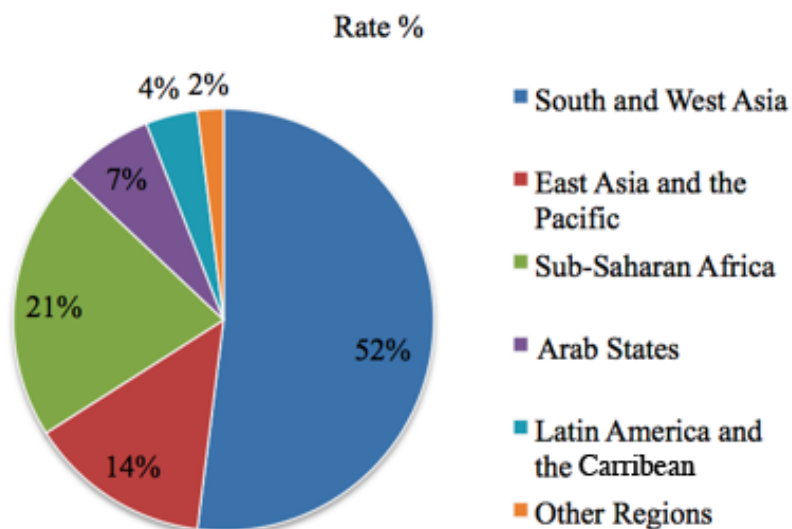
Figure 1: Illiterate Population in the World



Source:(UNESCO Institute for Statistics, January 2009b)

Asian and the Pacific Countries constitute 71% of the world's illiterate population. This reflects a serious situation considering around 66% of the illiterates are women. The illiteracy levels are higher among people living in rural and remote areas. In countries where the overall adult literacy rate is lower, the gap between female and male literacy rate is greater. Countries which have implemented Community Learning Center Program (CLCPs) since 2000 have recorded increases in literacy rates. Figure 2 gives the distribution of global adult (15 years and above) illiterate population by region during 2005-2007.

Figure 2: Distribution of Global Adult Illiterate Population by Region



Source:(UNESCO Institute for Statistics, January 2009b)

The above figure shows that three-fifths of the world's illiterate population lives in six Asian countries. During the 2000s, when countries began to address the problems of adult illiteracy, rates steadily dropped. Literacy and literacy skills were regarded as the most important tools to enable the community to solve their daily problems and enabled them to participate in social, political and economic activities. As literacy developed, literacy skills became a major tool in learning and were partly responsible for the rapid changes in the new century.

Attempting to improve countries' literacy levels, the Asia and Pacific Program of Education for All¹ (APPEAL) established the Community Learning Centers (CLCs) to act as a linkage for local institutions to focus on the broader issues of community development. The acceptance of the CLCP was primarily due to historical factors. Governments of the above mentioned countries had found that their own programs were insufficient in responding to the needs of learners at the community level. Several proposals and recommendations made by "experts" from the Asian Development Bank, the UNESCO, the UN, and the Education Ministries in the early 1990s also added to the decision for accepting the programs.

What is the Community Learning Center Program (CLCP)?

The CLCP is the newest program to promote the level of literacy in Asian and the Pacific Countries and was initially set up according to the framework of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Program of Education For All with the financial assistance of Japan and Norway in 1998 (APPEAL, 2005).

This program was intended for uneducated and unskilled adolescents and youth, unemployed educated youth, child laborers, women, and subsistence farmers. Promotion of literacy was made through basic life skills, non-formal education, and community development activities (UNESCO, 2008b). The key feature of the CLCP is that it does not require new infrastructures.

This meant that it can be operated from existing health centers, temples, mosques, primary schools or other suitable places (UNESCO, 2008a). So far, 25 countries around the globe have joined the CLCP: this includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Maldives (APPEAL, October 2005). This paper presents how the CLCP was carried out in four selected countries: the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. To begin with, a review of the term "literacy" is made in the following paragraphs.

Literacy and Community Literacy Development (CLD)

Defining literacy is a contentious issue. One way of defining the term is to look at history. Literacy has often been associated with the ability to read and write. Erben and Castaneda (2009, p. 131) showed that being literate means more than just being able to read and write, but being able to achieve an adequate level for communication purposes. Being literate means that an individual is able to communicate with other individuals in society where ideas can be exchanged and behavior can take place. Limage (1993, p. 29) has also classified international meanings of literacy as a set of basic skills, as the foundation for a higher quality of life and as a reflection of political and structural realities. Thus, definitions vary according to countries. In the context of the countries explored in this study, a person is literate if he/she knows how to read, write, and understand simple sentences in his/her national or ethnic language or a foreign language (APPEAL, 1993). The concept "literacy development" is derived from the APPEAL definition: literacy development occurs when a set of reading, writing, reasoning, and oral communication skills develop. Community Literacy Development therefore needs to be understood in

terms of the acquisitions of sets of simple multidimensional skills at the community level (Dickinson & Neuman, 2006, p. 311). These skills also include technological knowledge (Yopp & Singer, 1994). Using the above operational framework, a community that is able to meet the goal of CLD would have developed a literacy community whereby most of the people can read, write and do simple calculating. To achieve this goal some techniques have to be employed. One of them is the CLCP. The focus of this study is to describe role of the CLCP in CLD in the four Asian and the Pacific Countries mentioned earlier.

The CLCP in the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The CLCP in Bangladesh is being implemented by the Ministry of Education. In the 58 districts and 150 cities that adopted the program, reading materials and basic information for daily life are provided. Nearly 64% of the CLCPs are implemented by local support and the remaining 36% by NGOs. On average, 75-100 people are members in every CLCP, of whom 70% are women.

CLCPs in Bangladesh are oriented towards covering the needs of learners and developing their literacy ability in order to solve problems. Specifically, the CLCP objectives are to operate as institutions of continuing education; to address the life-long learning and community development, and to empower individuals and communities through education. With gradual widening of development interventions, the objectives of Bangladesh's CLCPs have incorporated the following objectives:

1. To develop networking with their respective community resource centers, lobby with the government bodies and audio-visual units for IT;
2. To conduct vocational training and to arrange mainstreaming of CLCP learners (Rahman, December 2003).

To meet these objectives, several programs under the CLCP in Bangladesh have been implemented. These include Gender, Sanitation, Environmental Conservation, Income Generation Activity, Health Awareness, Water, Sanitation and other Socio-Cultural Development Programs (Rahman, December 2003). In the context of Bangladesh, a person who is able to write a letter in any language has been considered literate. With the hope of decreasing levels of illiteracy, the CLCP has implemented several programs to develop writing skills, two being basic literacy and post-literacy.

A. Basic literacy

The CLCP offers facilities to teach reading and writing, as well as simple calculating. It also enables participants to read story books, monthly magazines, daily newspapers, letters, write at least ten simple sentences and complete all common forms (Rahman, December 2003).

B. Post-Literacy Program

Under this program, the CLCP targets neo-literates and literates to improve their level of literacy, as well as to increase their social awareness, especially concerning their role in community development (The International Labor Organization, 2008b). The main goals of the program are the retention of already acquired literacy skills and improvement of literacy skills (Dhaka Ahsania Mission & Department of Non-Formal Education, 2008).

The CLCP and CLD in the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Results of the study showed that not only had levels of literacy improved, but that the quality of life of the community had improved. Table 1 illustrates the changes during 2000-2007.

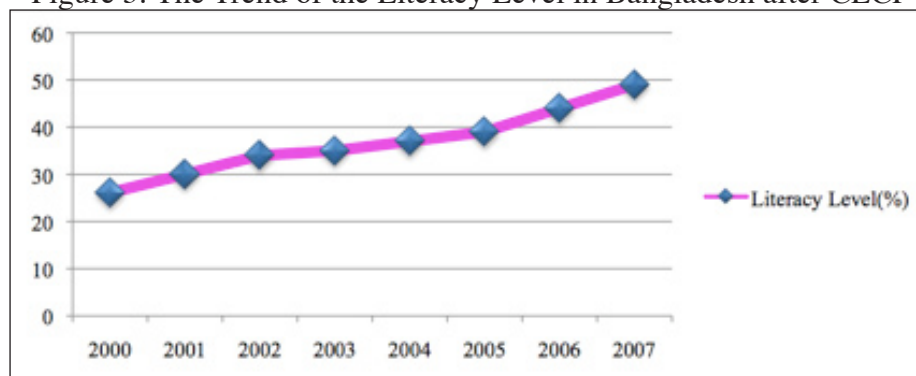
Table 1: Literacy level in Bangladesh after CLCP

Year	Literacy Level (%)	Illiteracy Level (%)
2000	26.1	73.9
2001	30	70
2002	34	66
2003	35	65
2004	37	63
2005	39	61
2006	44	56
2007	49	51

Source:(The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008)

The literacy level in Bangladesh before the implementation of CLCPs was 26.1%. Seven years after that, the percentage, increased to 49% (Dhaka Ahsania Mission & Department of Non-Formal Education, 2008; The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008). This goes to show that the various methods adopted through CLCPs had made an impact on the level of literacy. Figure 3 shows the rising trend over the seven years, i.e. 2000-2007.

Figure 3: The Trend of the Literacy Level in Bangladesh after CLCP



Source:(Dhaka Ahsania Mission & Department of Non-Formal Education, 2008;
The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008)

In December 2002, Bangladesh's CLCs had 58,594 members of which 13,277 were illiterate when they joined the CLCP. By the end of the program period, 4,137 reported to have achieved basic literacy which is equivalent to grade 1-2 (Rahman, December 2003).

Based on the reports, the literacy programs of the CLCPs in Bangladesh have been successful. The objectives of both upgrading the literacy skill and retaining the acquired ability have been met. Hence, the quality of life of learners had been improved as well. The average number of members of a CLC was 100 persons and the average attendance was 80 persons per working day.

The program had clearly benefited both rural and urban communities that participated. Members were able to read, write, and count. What is important to note is that the achievements of CLC members were better than those attained by learners under the government-run Non-formal Education Program. The study also pointed out that a significant proportion of women members in CLCs (43-70%) could perform simple tasks like reading big font letters and children's books. The percentage of members who could do simple arithmetic ranged from 8-59% in a CLC. The experience suggests that it takes time and additional sustained effort for people to move from a basic level of literacy to developing a reading behavior.

The CLCP in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The CLCP is a new type of community literacy development program in Iran. The government of Iran, APPEAL, and the UN cooperatively initiated the CLCP in the country to promote the literacy level and solve the problem of illiteracy; to improve human development by providing opportunities for lifelong

learning for all people of the community; to develop learning networks involving many individuals, governmental and non-governmental organizations, agencies, local resource people, workplace, and schools; to empower the poor community to become self-reliant; and to be a resource center and a venue for the community cultural and educational activities (Education Department – National Commission of UNESCO Iran, April 2008).

Initially, there were four communities in two states selected to pioneer the program. Due to the significant achievements, all the states of Iran have started to set up the CLCP. The number of CLCs in Iran increased to 2,317 centers in 2004, to 2,648 centers in 2006 and to 3,517 centers in 2007. According to Iran's Fourth Development Plan, the number of CLCs will increase to 6,000 by end of 2009 (Ebrahimian, Mokhtab, & Mosavi, 2007).

In Iran, people are considered literate if they can read and write a text in Persian or in any other language, regardless of whether or not they have an educational certificate (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, April 2008). The CLCP was viewed as a mechanism for lifelong learning and catered to literate adults beyond the level of primary school. All CLCPs offered literacy activities through equivalency programs using three main approaches: classroom teaching, distance education and independent study. The CLC literacy programs are divided into three types: the basic literacy program, post-literacy programs and continuing education (Mehdizadeh, Mitra Bahirae, Qeysar, & Alizadeh, 2004).

1) Basic Literacy Program (BLP)

The CLCP launched the BLP to educate people who are not able to read, write and do simple calculating. After completion, neo-literates may then proceed to the post-literacy programs.

2) Post-Literacy Program (PLP)

Post-literacy programs have been conducted to respond to the diverse needs of communities' learners. The main objectives here are to upgrade basic skills such as reading, writing and do simple calculating skills; to impart education for illiterate adults, adolescents and out-of-school children; and to provide literacy services for improving the neo-literates and learners' literacy skills.

3) Continuing Education (CE)

In addition to basic and post-literacy programs, the CLCP has also been designed to deliver continuing education and other community development activities in Iran. The goals of the CE in the country are capacity building of the poor allow-

ing them sustainable access to the employment opportunity to make them partners in social progress in communities.

The CLCP and CLD in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran has found the CLCP highly effective in solving the problem of illiteracy. The level of literacy has improved tremendously over the year, and details of literacy development are shown in Table 2.

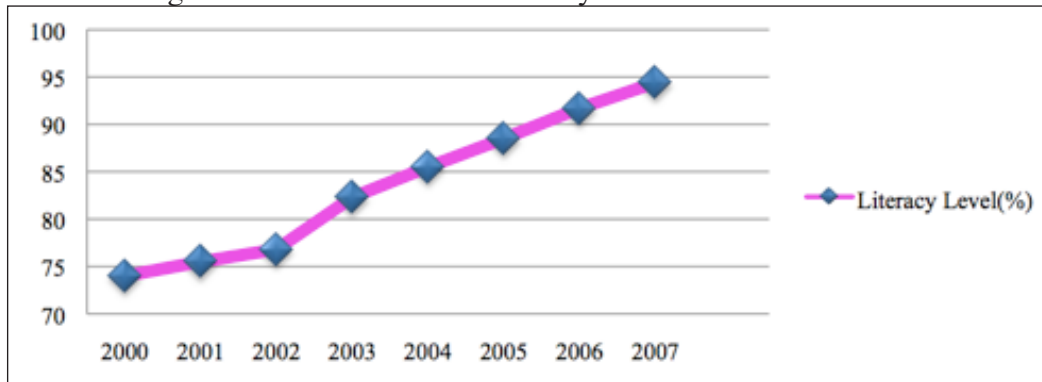
Table 2: Literacy level in Iran after CLCP

Year	Literacy Level (%)	Illiteracy Level (%)
2000	74	26
2001	75.5	24.5
2002	76.8	23.2
2003	82.3	17.7
2004	85.5	14.5
2005	88.5	11.5
2006	91.7	8.3
2007	94.4	5.6

Source:(LMO, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c)

The level of literacy in Iran before the implementation of the CLCP was 74%. The percentage, however, has increased to 94.4% seven years after the introduction of CLCP in the country (LMO, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). Based on the above, it means that the level of literacy in Iran improved by around 20% after the implementation of the CLCP. The trend of the literacy level in Iran after the CLCP is as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The Trend of the Literacy Level in Iran after CLCP



Source: (LMO, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c)

According to current educational statistics of Iran, the percentage of the literate population has continually increased. Doubtless, the CLCs have played a very important role in providing learning opportunities for women. After the establishment of CLCs, a large number of community people have participated in the CLCP. Examination of the activities implemented by CLCs showed that 79% of the participants were women. Men preferred their wives and daughters to go to the CLCP, where women and girls were exclusively taught by women literacy teachers, particularly in cases where the village elementary school was for both boys and girls who were taught by male as well as female teachers. Moreover, women and girls could go freely to CLCP classes unlike an earlier situation where the classes were held at rented houses or villagers' homes. Men did not allow their wives and daughters to attend those classes.

Success in promoting community participation in the programs has been due to various factors. These included responsibility for very young or handicapped children, preoccupation with household chores, the narrow-mindedness of male family members, illness or disability among community people, and nomadic lifestyles. Apart from the development of literacy level, several other perceptible changes have also happened in the communities after the implementation of the CLCP. Positive changes among the people had occurred. They were more aware of their rights, greater participation in village council meetings and other social affairs, a readiness to participate in elections, greater involvement in family decision-making in matters related to number of children, children's education and marriage, increased earnings from selling hand-made garments, greater self-confidence, and better knowledge of matters related to hygiene and sanitation.

The CLCP in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Vietnam participated in the CLCP by promoting literacy through community-based institutions for non-formal education (Hiroshi, 2008, p. 191). The program started in 1998 with the establishment of two pilot centers in the states of Hoa Binh and Lai Chau, and was expanded in 1999 to include two new centers in Thai Binh and Bac Giang. The program is the responsibility of the Research Center for Literacy and Continuing Education under the National Institute for Educational Sciences, Ministry of Education and Training, in collaboration with the Vietnamese National Commission (APPEAL, 2001). By the year 2015, it was expected that around 90% of all communities would have a CLCP (Hiroshi, 2008, p. 191). At present, there are 8,000 CLCs distributed throughout the country (The Continuing Education Department, 18-20 April 2007, 2004).

The main objectives of CLCs in Vietnam are to represent a new integrated approach to improve the quality of life of Vietnamese. These would be achieved through providing information, making continuing education available to anyone, providing community meeting places, offering access to computers and software training, providing safe places to study away from home, providing books and periodicals, helping villagers to increase their income through various training on agriculture and animal raising and introducing alternative income-generating activities, reducing illiteracy and maintaining literacy by organizing literacy and post-literacy classes, establishing and upgrading libraries of CLCs, improving the villager's quality of life through the organizations of seminars, group discussions and talks on various topics related to the needs of the villagers, preserving and enriching the village's life through the promotion of socio-cultural and sport activities; and developing and preserving local culture and traditional ways of life (Research Centre for Literacy and Continuing Education of Vietnam, 1999; The Vietnam Learning Association, 2008).

The CLCP has implemented several programs to benefit everyone. The programs consist of education programs equivalent to both lower and upper secondary education and higher education, ICT and vocational training program (The Continuing Education Department, 2004). The CLCP has varied participants, ranging from illiterate people and those who have just been out of illiteracy, to those who dropped out of the formal education (Chau, 2007). However, priority is given to adult people especially women and disadvantaged groups such as farmers and ethnic minorities (Brouwer, 2006; Government of Vietnam, 2003).

According to the Vietnam Population and Housing Census a surrogate measure of literacy was as follows: persons were literate if they had completed grade 5 or higher or if they were head of their household (or the representative of the house-

hold who was interviewed by the census collector believed that they were currently able to read and write) (Tram, Ayse, Ann, & Pamela, 2004). The focus of literacy activities in Vietnam was on continuing education and also oriented to cover the needs of learners and to develop their ability in making use of the literacy skills to solve their problems.

The implementation of the CLCP in Vietnam was seen as a means of contributing to the equitable and sustainable development of different groups of people in disadvantaged areas by improving the level of literacy among communities. Accordingly, the CLCP implemented several literacy programs, with the purpose of achieving and then maintaining community literacy. The short-term course was to help learners catch up with rapid scientific and technical changes required by the family. The programs were to apply to both rural and urban populations (The Continuing Education Department, 2004). Vietnam has close cooperation with international organizations, local NGOs working for literacy promotion, and various organizations. Through the CLCs, more than 725 personnel from NGOs and government and donor agencies received training and shared their knowledge and experiences with other participants from different regions in Vietnam.

The CLCP and CLD in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Vietnamese CLCs had improved the level of literacy through various activities such as materials and curriculum development, training, networking, information sharing and advocacy. The main aim of most CLCPs in Vietnam was to promote the community's reading, writing and calculating skills ability. Evidence showed that the programs were very successful. Table 3 provides more details of the situation.

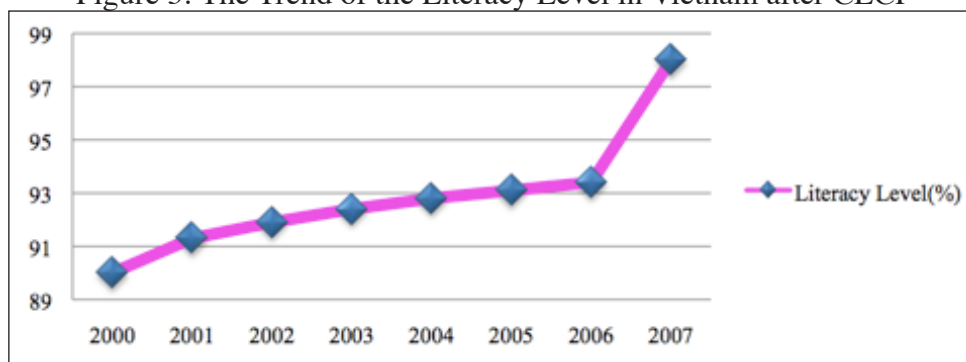
Table 3: Literacy level in Vietnam after the CLCP

Year	Literacy Level (%)	Illiteracy Level (%)
2000	90	10
2001	91.9	8.1
2002	93	7
2003	94.4	5.6
2004	95.5	4.5
2005	96.5	3.5
2006	97	3
2007	98	2

Source: (GSO of Vietnam, 2008; MET of Vietnam, 2006)

Before the CLCP, the country's literacy level was 90%. After seven years of CLCP implementation, the percentage had increased to 98 (GSO of Vietnam, 2008; MET of Vietnam, 2006). The trend of the literacy level in Vietnam after the CLCP is delineated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The Trend of the Literacy Level in Vietnam after CLCP



Source: (GSO of Vietnam, 2008; MET of Vietnam, 2006)

The priority and efforts done during seven years have led Vietnam to achieve the high level of success in literacy development. Through the CLCP, it was possible to achieve success on NFE in the areas of illiteracy eradication, post-literacy programs, equivalency/complementary education, life skills and community development programs. The learning needs and skills of the working people were met and they could increase their productivity and income and thus were able to make career changes (MET of Vietnam, 2004). To promote the level of literacy in communities, the CLCP obtained help from universities and companies in Vietnam. Through various educational programs based on community needs, structural development, and evaluation program activities it was possible for CLCP to meet the desired impact.

Incorporating grassroots-level CLCs proved to be an appropriate model of education and as such the programs were gradually established and operated in mountainous rural areas in Vietnam (MET of Vietnam, 2004). Since February 2002 many CLCs were established in many remote communities of the country. These CLCs have used the meeting halls of the communities, cultural houses of the wards, temples, and primary schools as places in which their educational programs were conducted. With the support from the education service at the community level, and People's Committee at grassroots level, these CLCPs have provided more educational opportunities to a wider variety of people in the communities, almost all of whom are adults between the ages of 15-35 (Brouwer, 2006). Based on the success,

the Continuing Education Department of Vietnam has found that the CLCP model is useful to expand the literacy activities for developing the level of literacy among people in the country. This sets the next goal for Education For All (EFA), i.e. to achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy through the CLCP by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults (Government of Vietnam, 2003).

The CLCP in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

In Pakistan, the government works closely with APPEAL to help NGOs implement the CLCP. The government felt that the Non-Formal Education classes, usually conducted for six or nine months and then stopped, were not effective and were not based on the needs of the community.

The CLCP, on the other hand, began with the purpose of helping the people, and so attempted to identify their real problems. With the aim of enabling communities to learn new knowledge and literacy skills, the CLCP initiated a multipurpose program. Pakistan's CLC is defined as a place, institution, or center for accessing knowledge, information, and literacy skills (Shaheen, 2004).

The CLCP in Pakistan was started in collaboration with the NGOs, GOs, UN agencies and the community. The community was made to understand that they could help improve their own lives through knowledge and skills. Using the success of pilot CLCs in the country, a number of CLCPs were implemented in many communities in an effort to improve the level of literacy. So far, around 50,000 CLCs have been implemented in 114 districts of the country. Most of them were implemented in rural areas where around 145,000 people were literate (Abid & Saleem, 24-29 October 2005; Bukhari, 2007; Ghauri, 2006).

By identifying the needs of the community, information was obtained with regards to fields of interest. Having such information it was possible to strengthen their capacities to carry out activities to educate and improve the quality of their life. Given the community needs and empowerment, individuals could involve themselves without gender bias. That was the purpose of the CLCP in Pakistan. To achieve the stated goals of the Literacy, Social and Community Awareness, Active Participation of Women Members Programs have been implemented through the CLCP. One of the major programs is the CLD program.

In Pakistan's definition of literacy, a person is literate if he or she can read and write a short sentence and understand a simple statement in everyday life. To encourage as many people in the literacy programs as possible, there are adult literacy centers, skill development programs, as well as the 10-year United Nations Literacy Decade program, National Commission for Human Development literacy

program, a literacy campaign and the program on Addressing Child Labor through Quality Education for All were implemented. The programs were conducted for six months a year, two hours a day, and six days a week (Ministry of Education of Pakistan, 2004). The basic programs were to develop writing, reading, and calculating skills and were targeted especially for illiterate persons.

The CLCP and CLD in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Based on reports it has been shown that the CLCP has played an encouraging role in CLD in Pakistan. It taught learners how to read, write, and do simple calculating, and the literacy level in the country has improved after the CLCP. The average increase in literacy level between year 2000 and 2007 was 1.8%, which means roughly a 12.5 percentile point increase was achieved in seven years. The present projected literacy level in Pakistan is around 55.5%. The pattern of increase in literacy and illiteracy level from 2000 to 2007 is illustrated in Table 4.

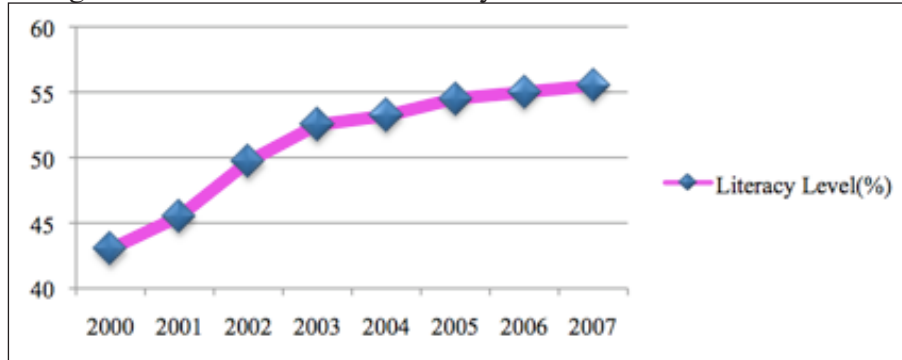
Table 4: Literacy level in Pakistan after CLCP

Year	Literacy Level (%)	Illiteracy Level (%)
2000	43	47
2001	45.5	54.5
2002	49.7	40.3
2003	52.5	47.5
2004	53.2	46.8
2006	54.5	45.5
2005	55	45
2007	55.5	44.5

Source: (Abid & Saleem, 24-29 October 2005; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, January 2009a)

Prior to the CLCP in Pakistan, the literacy level was 43%. It increased to 55.5% seven years after the CLCP (Abid & Saleem, 24-29 October 2005; Ghauri, 2006; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, January 2009a). The trend of the literacy level in Pakistan after CLCP is as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: The Trend of the Literacy Level in Pakistan after CLCP



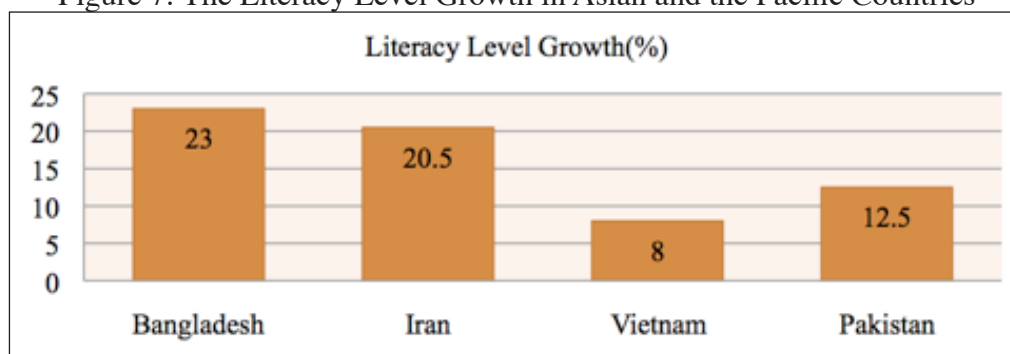
Source:(Abid & Saleem, 24-29 October 2005; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, January 2009b)

The success of the CLCP can be attributed to several factors. The people found it to be a practical and reasonable approach to help their problems. The major contributing factor seemed to be their collective effort in making the program a success. Through increasing their literacy level, the CLCP helped to create opportunities for the people to be more enterprising and earn better incomes. According to the Pakistani National Plan of Action for Education For All 2001-2015, the country should achieve a 50% improvement in level of literacy through the CLCP by the end of 2015, especially for women, equitable access to basic and CE for all adults will be the EFA goals and targets in the country (The International Labour Organization, 2008a).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the CLCP as an educational tool had played a very encouraging role in CLD in Asian and the Pacific Countries. On the average, the level of literacy in the countries increased roughly 16% through the CLCP during seven years. The detail of the literacy level growth in the four abovementioned countries is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: The Literacy Level Growth in Asian and the Pacific Countries



On the average, the annual growth level of literacy in the countries is around 2.3%. Among selected countries of the study, Vietnam with an 8% growth had the lowest literacy level and Bangladesh with a 23% growth had the highest literacy level.

After reviewing the analysis, it becomes clear that what makes the CLCP famous and important is not merely the successful roles that the program has implemented, but the fact that success of the program depended more on the presence of effective activities and their relationship with other factors. This argument was supported by the data that has been gathered from four selected countries that participated in the CLCP. In these countries, local leaders, community participation, international organizations, good educators, government, bazaars, market fairs, cultural and sports events, international agencies, NGOs, and commercial institutions had helped the CLCP in this process. All of the factors worked together to the success of the CLCP. Each factor has its own advantages and strengths. Removing one factor will retard the process of achieving success. One factor is no more or less important than the others. All of the literacy programs and activities in the CLCP in these countries have been implemented effectively with cooperation of these factors. Otherwise, the CLCP alone was not able to achieve this success.

Based on the statements above, we offer the following recommendations to best promote the level of community literacy among people in Asian and the Pacific Countries:

1. Financial Supports
2. Change of the Community Perception towards Literacy
3. Decentralization
4. Effective Policy-Making
5. Localization of Textbooks
6. Capacity Building of the CLCP's Organizers

7. Exchange the experiences among participating countries to strengthen the CLCP in CLD.

It is hoped that these recommendations will become significant guidelines for the Ministries of Education for future CLD programs in these countries.

Notes:

¹ APPEAL is a regional cooperative program designed to promote basic education for all in the Asia and Pacific region. It was launched in New Delhi on 23 February 1987. The overall aim of APPEAL is to promote lifelong learning through the integration of all aspects of educational planning including literacy, universal primary education and continuing education. Although APPEAL focused mainly on non-formal adult education during the 1990s, its coverage has expanded to include formal primary education in view of the Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum (Senegal, 2000).

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The Mediatization of Politics in Pakistan: A Structural Analysis

By Muhammad Atif Khan

More than eighty years ago, when Walter Lippmann, the father of modern communication, opined that the significant revolution of modern times is not industrial or economic or political, but the art of creating consent among the governed, it sounded utopian (Lippmann, 1954). He anticipated that “it is no daring prophecy to say that the knowledge of how to create consent will alter every political premise” (ibid, p. 248). Now at the start of twenty- first century that truth is not only self- evident, rather it has crossed the barriers to an extent that the media subvert or control the political process itself. The McLuhan metaphor of *global village* has not only become the cause of change in social and economic trends, but the information explosion also affected state decision making process. In Western democracies, the decade of 1980s and 1990s were of particular importance when the advent of private news channels, satellite transmission and then the cable system brought a revolution in the societal, cultural and political life. The growing influence of media in all these sectors compelled the western academia to establish a theory of the influence media exert on society, culture and politics in western liberal democracies, more particularly in USA, and to a lesser extent, in Western Europe. They eventually devised this mechanism as “Mediatization”. This term was first used by a Swedish media researcher Kent Asp who took mediatization of politics as a “process whereby a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics” (Asp, 1986, p.359) (Hjarvard, 2008).

Though there are a good number of media scholars who differed with one another on the exact definition of mediatization, yet this debate is out of limits for this study. Hence just for the sake of clarity we borrow, from the work of Darren G. Lillker, who defines mediatization as “a theory which argues that it is the media which shapes and frames the processes and discourse of political communication as well the society in which that communication takes place” (Lillker, 2006, p.117).

Mediatization so far is a western phenomenon. Studies of mediatization of politics and/or society in developing countries are largely absent. But this is a world of globalization. The complex interdependence culture in global issues is a major

determinant for diffusion of many Western ideas and themes, such as the trend under discussion, which is on move from developed Western world to developing countries. A significant example in this flow is the *Aljazeera* culture and its effects on Middle Eastern politics which would be unimaginable a decade ago, keeping in mind the history of closed and authoritative regimes in Arab world. This diffusion created a dire need to study this phenomenon of mediatization in politics of developing countries. India, Pakistan, South Africa, Brazil, Singapore, Malaysia are some of many countries from Asia, Africa and South America where the role of media is growing from an observer to an active player in political decision making.

‘In other parts of the world’, says Aasma Shirazi, a well-known Pakistani TV journalist, in an interview, ‘Free media emerges out of democracy, but here, in Pakistan, democracy is emerging out of free media’ (Hiel, 2008). The role Pakistani media played in the ouster of military dictator General Pervez Musharaf from the corridors of power, the reinstatement of deposed chief justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Chaudry, are few examples which ask for a systemic study for the growing and dominant role media playing in the state decision making process.¹

A deeper insight into these developments reveals the fact that actually this is the advent of a stronger mediatization of politics where media is transforming itself into an independent institution and changing its status from a mere informer to a dynamic player in politics of Pakistan.

Being confined to a case-level study of Pakistani politics and media, one should not enter into the explanation and academic debate going on the phenomenon and process of mediatization. Rather, we start our study to discuss the factors which affected Pakistani politics to be mediatized. There are different developments that occurred in the structure and functions of contemporary Pakistani media which became the causes of this development. We will elaborate the most important of them in order to analyze the process of mediatization in politics of Pakistan.

One major variable in growing influence of media in Pakistan is, undoubtedly, the advent of private television news channels. The dawn of twenty-first century in Pakistan marked the beginning of media boom due to the permission, given by government, to establish private news channels and FM radio stations. Allama Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan, once used a beautiful metaphor to say that ‘*Pasbaan milgae kaabe ko Sanam Khane se*’, that is, sometimes such a variation occurred in the course of history that a polytheist came to guard the interest of *Kaaba*, the Muslim religious centre and a symbol of monotheism. One can happily quote this metaphor here to elucidate how the permission for a free, private broadcast media was not given by a democratic regime, as in all western democracies, but by a military dictator. Hence for a comprehensive study of mediatization

of politics in Pakistan, we shall elaborate, in the following paragraphs, different reasons for which the broadcast media succeeded to free itself from any political dependence and to become an active, independent player in the political stage.

The difference private news channels showed in their coverage, as compared to the previous performance of state-controlled channel, had a tremendous effect. They were more independent and their coverage expanded from the official corridors of the president's palace, PM House and ministries secretariat to small villages and ordinary towns in the country. People started to compare *Khabernama* vs. *Wazeernama*, and in this competition the former succeeded due to its coverage of the realpolitik and the issues of common masses.²

Cable system was introduced in Pakistan's major cities in 2004 and then prevailed all over the country.³ This arrangement again made an easy access to private channels. Before this system, it was considered a luxurious facility for elites to enjoy international channels by dish antenna. But this new cable system facilitated all the concerned parties. It gave extended and unprecedented access to private channels, it created thousands of new jobs as cable operators particularly in densely populated cities and towns, and it gave the common masses a cheaper and almost free access to national and international TV channels. In a nutshell it transformed all the daily life routine of the masses in Pakistan where earlier majority of viewers of Pakistan Television (PTV), state-controlled television channel, used it for only two hours, from eight to ten in the evening for a drama serial and a news bulletin. Private news channels started new and diverse programs for all age groups and thus people were glued to their TV sets almost all the day (Zehra, 2005). This gave a rise in popularity, reliability and trust of these TV channels in the eyes of common masses. On the other hand, political parties, even state officials became dependent to convey and defend their policies through the use of this new media.

The growing popularity of broadcast media also requires, as a prerequisite, an analysis of the Pakistani societal features. Prevalent illiteracy and rural culture are some of the basic characteristics of the Pakistani society. According to a UN data the literacy rate in Pakistan is 49.9 percent, this means almost half of the population cannot read newspapers. This was the main reason people were not able to have a direct access to new developments in politics. In a country which is sixth most populous in the world, had only 5 million news readers out of more than 160 million in total. Rather these large illiterate masses were dependent on the educated persons for obtaining knowledge about political developments. These educated masses in their respective circles were acting as opinion leaders. But the new TV culture changed everything. Now every person, literate or illiterate, had a direct and equal access towards political developments using this new facility. Table.1

describes this growing media culture in Pakistan by increasing number of private news channels.

Table 1: Mass Media at a Glance

Medium	1999	2009
Local TV Channels	2	71
Radio Stations	22	25
FM Radio Station in Private Sector	Nil	111 (121 Licensed)
FM Radio Station in Public Sector	Nil	10
Dailies	310	350
Readership of Newspapers	-	5 Million
Viewership of TV	-	35 Million
Cable Operators (licensed)	Nil	1600
Cable Subscribers	Nil	5 Million

Source: A) PEMRA. B) Ministry of Information and Broadcast.

The realm of “Political Pundits” is a reality in journalism since Walter Lippmann legitimized the profession of journalism in early twentieth century. Their sphere, what Nimmo and Combs refer to as the ‘priestly establishment’ was evolved and developed in to an important figure at the end of last century (Nimmo and Combs, 1992, p.6). They defined this establishment of pundits as ‘a loose collectivity of journalists, analysts, policy experts, and other specialists who voice their special knowledge in public forums’ (ibid. p.24). The journalist-pundit is someone who is accepted by reader or viewer as an authority on political affairs. Such a person becomes ‘a source of opinion -formation and opinion -articulation, agenda -setting and agenda –evaluation’ (Mcnaair, 2007, p.71).With the growing importance of broadcasting over print media, the former also hired a parallel class of experts in their news and current affairs programs. This new class of ‘Broadcast Pundit’ used the same tactics of policy-formulating, with some new and useful features of eye contact, drama, and visual effects.

This culture of Broadcast Punditry has an alarmingly enhanced proportion in Pakistani media as compared to the developed world’s free media. Despite going into the merits and demerits of this new trend, it is a ground reality is that their role

in public opinion making and their influence in politics of Pakistan are ever growing. This culture starts with the launching of some debate and talk shows on major private news channels. In these show the anchors mediate between the public and the politicians, or the rulers and the opposition leaders, and providing all concerned parties a platform to exchange and discuss their point of view in front of camera, so the general masses can formulate their own opinion on policy issues. Hence with the passage of time, and obviously due to the rising popularity of these programs and their hosts, these mediators and anchor persons developed themselves as experts, and started to give their own opinion on policy issues. They now move from a mediator into the role of active participant. Even in some much criticized programs, like *Jawabdeh* on Geo TV, these hosts tend to act as judges or police officers, in their tone and scripts, while the political leadership is presented there as a culprit. Despite all of its deficiencies, these programs are much popular in general viewers. The inability of larger illiterate masses to study relevant documents, books or research articles, the direct, cheap and easy access to these ready-made opinions on political issues, and the general reliability of these journalists and analyst in the eyes of common people, are some major factors behind the beginning of media-tization of politics in Pakistan by these TV journalist and experts. This culture in broadcast news clearly deviated from the ideal impartiality of news and in reality it contains what McNair proposed as ‘a deep structural bias towards the status quo’ (ibid. p.75).

The popularity and influence on masses in making public opinion of these new ‘broadcast Pundits’ is evident in last years of Musharaf era when military junta stressed the owners of TV channels to stop some very popular current affairs talk shows. *Capital Talk* by Hamid Mir, *Mere Mutabiq* by Shahid Masood, *Off the Record* by Kashif Abbasi, and *Live with Talat* by Talat Hussein were some of these shows whose relay was banned by Musharaf regime in the crisis regarding the suspension of Chief Justice. Hence news bulletins were on the run. But actual threat for government was these broadcast pundits who were the major determinants in making and then strengthening public opinion against military role and against suspension of Chief Justice (CJ) by General Musharaf. The situation was again raised on 12th of May 2008, when MQM threatened the cable operators to shun the famous Pakistani TV Channels in Karachi at the event of CJ’s arrival there. Interestingly the most critique of this dictatorial act, Pakistan Peoples Party, played the same tactic of suspending the transmission of some private news channels on 15th of March 2009, when opposition parties started a long march towards the capital, Islamabad, demanding reinstatement of CJ and other deposed judges. These similar acts of different regimes, authoritarian as well as democratic, reveal not only the

growing influence of Pakistani media from an observer to an active player in Politics, rather it also showed that the political leadership failed to comprehend the new power play of media and how to mold it, or tackle it in a democratic and professional way. The new scenario of Pakistani media and politics gave a clear picture of mediatization of Pakistani politics where media enhanced its role from an observer to an active player of political game.

Another important factor in this process of mediatization is the introduction of different visual techniques which are par excellence in their effects on viewers. Two of these techniques, used by Pakistani TV media in the politically turbulent years of 2007 to 2009, are worth mentioning here.

The sound bite culture is on rise in the western professionalized media, and Pakistani journalists followed this with drastic effects. We explain this technique, for the purpose of clarification, as a line or sentence taken from a longer speech or interview of a personality to use it as a hint line of the broadcast content. The sound bite has remained a major feature of news management in Western media since 1980s. When a political leader is interviewed, or when they give a speech or comment on any policy, sentences with news worthiness are extracted by broadcasters that fit within the framing and agenda of the transmitted report. The growing mediatization and a high level of journalistic intervention in Western politics resulted in broadcasting the sound bites of political leaders with less policy content and more attack-related and campaign buzz-related content (Esser, 2008). On the other hand, in Western democracies, inclusion of sound bite becomes a general feature of professionalized campaigns and communication to attract the reporters and to control coverage of political campaigns. There are exceptions to this, as the famous sound bite of US president George Bush, declaring the war against terrorists of 9/11 attacks, as a ‘new crusader’ on September 16, 2001, went wrong, and was deemed offensive in the Muslim world, compelled him to apologize and change the stance. Despite these rare exceptions, most political actors in western democracies appeared in control during interviews and intersperse their arguments with memorable phrases designed for posterity. The situation is in opposite direction, however, in Pakistani political culture. Political leadership, with a confined print media experience, was accustomed to give sentimental and offensive remarks and denying it thereafter, if it went wrong. But these political dodges proved to be a failure after the advent of TV culture. Now all of these sound bites with their visuals are undeniable. President Musharaf’s declaration of ‘Our power’ to the massacre of political workers and lawyers on 12 May 2007 in Karachi, the manhandling of a police officer to illegally suspended Chief Justice and pushing him in a police car, Benazir Bhutto’s desire in her speech to ‘hang over the flag of Pakistan on residence of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudry, and more recently President Asif Ali

Zerdari's sound bite while giving an interview in a famous Pakistani Current affairs show that 'political promises and agreements are not holy religious things (neither *Quran*, nor *Hadith*) to be respected, became the much infuriated sound bites on the eve of the campaigns for restoration of judiciary. Hence in these episodes Pakistani media made a dual use of these sound bites as indication of the political leadership commitments for salvation of the political crisis, and as an alternative of print media's follow-ups, where these sound bites and their respective visuals remained on air hundreds of times during the turbulent political crisis. Particularly, the sound bite of President Asif Ali Zerdari (mentioned in last example), on the most popular Pakistani news channel, Geo News, caused such furor that it became the major reason for a *de facto* governmental order to suspend the transmission of this Channel at the peak of Long March Episode on March 2009. On the other hand it kept all doors closed for political lies in traditional domestic culture. Some commentators and analysts of political communication voiced their concerns for the use of these sound bites without being fully contextualized as unethical and professional deceit. Nevertheless the commentators note rise in the sound bite culture. Pakistan has, with all obvious reasons, have been no exception in the use of this journalistic technique against the political leadership that was deceiving the same media, in a print media milieu before.

The second equally important key factor in TV journalism is the introduction of live transmission in important political events. This live broadcasting in PTV, the official, government-controlled television, was specific for the cricket matches, where the viewers were kept informed on every ball as it was played in the grounds. But now the private channels used the same techniques in showing the Government vs. Opposition political matches. And the result is manifold. Millions of viewers, commonly from urban and middle class group, were glued to their TV sets. Though the DSNG (Digital Satellite News Gathering) vehicles, used globally for live transmission, still lack in number, and used only by two or three leading news channels.⁴ However this deficiency is covered by a domestic solution of IPT (Internet Protocol Telephony), used to provide a quick, quasi-live coverage of different politically-important events. Nevertheless the prompt visual effects are par excellence for formulating a public action in a speedy manner (Ahmed, 2009) (Weiss, 2008). The competition among the private channels was lessening their role as gatekeepers, and government is also helpless to control the flow of information by any coercive or communicative methods. The disadvantages of this live coverage are as well present there as the absence of editor's overview allowed, sometimes, the broadcasting of the visuals which are considered unethical in routine transmission. However regarding or disregarding the effects of live coverage of private Television channels, the ground reality is its popularity in these years of

political turmoil in Pakistan.

No study on mediatization can be completed without considering the effects of commercialization on media which is acting here as *raison d'être* of this process. Though the main purpose of the press, since its emergence as a mass medium, has been to produce information in commodity forms (McNair, 2007), yet the advent of TV journalism manifolds this motive due to its better advertisement and communication medium and the growing competition among new private television channels. As Greg Philo notes, “a simple truth underpins the everyday practices of the media institutions and the journalists who work within them—that they are at some level in competition with each other to sell stories and maximize audiences” (Philo, 1993, p.111). In western democracies this culture is so overwhelming that the media culture and consumer culture, or in other terms, mediatization and commercialization, have become intertwined. Stig Hjarvard, a well known Nordic professor of media studies clarifies this trend in media management by following; “A stronger market orientation has led media to focus more closely on servicing its own readers and audiences. This has been said to imply a greater measure of *receiver steering* of the media, in the sense that attention to receivers has taken precedence over deference to other social institutions. Newspapers, radio, television and internet still devote space and time to politics, the Arts and cultural life, but to a lesser degree on those institutions’ terms or from the perspective of ‘public enlightenment’. Other institutions have instead become the raw material for the product the media serve to their readers, viewers and listeners. Where media in early days were sender-steered, e.g., steered by particular interests in the days of the party press or by the terms of public service broadcasting concessions, as media institutions they are in large part steered by the interests of their readers, viewers and listeners, their market demand and purchasing power” (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 119)).

Coming back to the pavilion, in Pakistani media history, the print media was not as much commercialized. Its major resources were coming from government department’s advertisement and state officials, often, using this monopoly to control the editorial policy of the news papers. The paper that is ‘more pro-government will earn more advertisement’, was the rule of the game, throughout the independence of Pakistan in 1947 until recent years, when the advent of private TV channels changed the scenario altogether. Now the major clients of these new media are not state departments, but the corporate companies doing business in consumer’s goods. They want to give their ads to the channels, and even sometimes at the transmission time of specific programs, which are more popular in the public. They transferred majority of their advertisement and marketing budgets from print media and Pakistan Television (PTV), state television network, to these growing –popular private TV channels in order to get better access to the target audiences.

In Table 2 and chart 1 an attempt is made to explain this transformation with the use of data available which shows the latest proportion of advertisement revenue given to broadcast and print media respectively. As a consequence, this new trend changed the issue- based news management in to a market- oriented media. As a general rule in democracies, people are more critical of their elected representatives, and this public trend changed the *modus operandi* of new media where ‘more anti-government will earn more business’ is considered a basic key to success. That is why in prime time slot of these news Channels, which is, in Pakistani Broadcast culture, from eight to twelve in the night, they usually present the news bulletins and Talk shows which are particularly more critical of public policies and hence more popular in audiences. The advertisement cost per minutes in this prime time slot is charged manifold, by these private news channels in Pakistan, as compared to other time slots.⁵

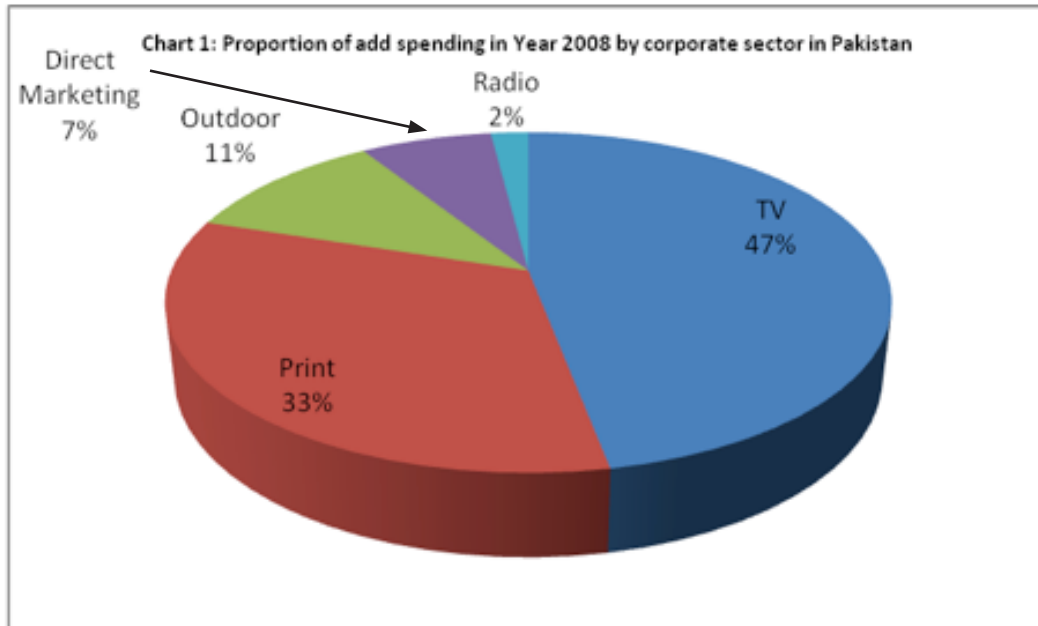
To a lesser account, this situation gives a negative impression to the performance of news management. Yet to a larger extent, it tends to get an effective watchdog role of journalism which is already much strong in Western liberal democracies, the US media performance in Watergate episode is only one example of this watchdog role of journalism. In Pakistani political scenario, we can safely quote ‘*Farah Dogar Case*’ here to indicate the extensive coverage where these media pundits revealed the corruption of ‘holy cows’ in Pakistan’s specific political culture.

Table 2: Comparative share of Advertisement revenue by Print and TV Media in Pakistan in Year 2008.

	Print	TV	Total	Print % Share	TV % Share	% Total
Gallup	Rs 8.16 bn	Rs 11.91 bn	Rs 20.07 bn	41	59	100
Mind-share	Rs 6.52 bn	Rs 10.98 bn	Rs 17.5 bn	37	63	100
Aurora	Rs 9.99 bn	Rs 11.7 bn	Rs 21.69 bn	46	54	100

Source: Gallup Survey of Pakistan. January 2009

Chart.1: Proportion of add spending in Year2008 by leading corporate sector in Pakistan



Source: Gallup Survey of Pakistan. January 2009

Though the recent studies on mediatization argue this phenomenon is related to a 'television era' (Lillker, 2007). However print media also started to revolutionize itself in order to cope with the media revolution. Pakistan's experience is also not an exception to this broad understanding, where the transforming role of media is on rise, from an observer to an active player in political game. Rather one innovative trend which came in Pakistani print media, parallel to popular TV coverage, is the introduction of investigative journalism. This new creed of investigative journalists can be declared, without the risk of exaggeration, as the Pakistani version of the 'Rottweiler Journalist'. In this regard the investigative unit of *The News*, a leading English daily, is worth mentioning here. This team of investigative journalists, led by investigative editor Ansar Abbasi, broke many invisible barriers which were considered before as 'no go areas' by mainstream media. They broke news about corruption of judges, generals, senior bureaucrats and top-brass political leadership. The main deficiency of this team was, however, their misplacement in English daily, keeping in mind that the readership of English newspapers is only five percent of total readership in Pakistan. This deficiency was soon recovered, by publication of the same investigative reports in its sister Urdu newspaper *Daily Jang*, which has the largest circulation in the country. These investigative stories,

though sometimes lacking in authenticity, are usually much popular in masses due to their scope and newsworthiness. Some observers and traditional journalists objected, however, on these reports as lacking media ethics or having violent nature. The fact is that in recent years of political turmoil, these investigative reports, despite all critics, were major stimuli in igniting the fierce political debates in leading talk shows of Pakistani Broadcast media.

Mediatization of Politics in Pakistan: A Structural Appraisal

Mediatization is no universal process that characterizes all societies. It is primarily a development that has accelerated particularly in the 1980s, in modern, highly industrialized, and chiefly Western societies, i.e., Europe, USA, Japan, Australia and so forth (Schulz, 2004). The end of the monopoly position of public service channels on the air waves, and the expansion of broadcasting services via satellite and cable created a more commercial and competitive climate in radio and television, in which market forces challenged television's identity and importance as a cultural institution (ibid).

In Pakistan, nevertheless, situation was completely different at this transitional period. As with many countries, emerging from colonial rule, the leaders of Pakistan's political establishment found it difficult to relinquish state control over broadcasting. Unfortunately something worse happened in Pakistan, as compared to other decolonized countries, in the form of martial laws, where army commanders took state control. These Generals, in particular were against independence of media, and especially the broadcast journalism. The Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV), state-controlled broadcast television channel, was established in 1964 by first Martial Law Administrator, General Ayub Khan. Since then PTV served as a medium of state propaganda. Parallel work had been done by another organization, that is, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBS), which established Radio Channels all over the country, but again under strict state control. In the era of 1980s when the western world was gradually developing in to a *Media-Centred Democracy*, Pakistani society and politics was going in to, or suffering from, a ruthless military dictatorship under General Zia ul Haq. An interesting feature, worth mentioning here, was the maintenance of status quo by the democratic regimes in last two decades of twentieth century. These rotating democratic regimes between Pakistan Peoples Party, under the leadership of (Late) Benazir Bhutto, and of Muslim League under direction of Nawaz Sharif maintained state monopoly over broadcasting media. They preached freedom of media, campaigned on tickets stressing broadcast freedom, but could not bring themselves to practice it, when in

rule. Public broadcast system was, for them, a convenient inherited instrument of controlling news management.

At the advent of twenty first century, the politics and society in Western world was crossing the bridges of mediatization. In their academia a debate on post mediatization of politics has started due to the advent and growing influence of digital media and its effects on their polity (Cheffee and Metzger, 2001) (Flanagan and Metzger, 2001) (Lillker, 2006). At the same time a revolution occurred in Pakistani media and politics by the permission, given by the government, to establish private- owned radio and television channels. The government decision to set up a regulatory body, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and its granting of license to private radio and television channels was a major step which started to change the media culture in Pakistan. Though was much late, as compared to the developed world, the credit of this development goes to an army dictator, General Pervez Musharaf, who liberated the broadcast spectrum from state control. The debut of this change was the transmission of Indus Vision, the first independent, private-owned TV in the history of Pakistani media and politics. This trend was followed by another channel, ARY Digital, started by a Dubai- based Pakistani business group in the same year of 2000. However these channels were not much effective due to their structural deficiencies and less experience in domestic media culture. The real change started to flourish when Jang Group of Publications, the largest print media tycoon in Pakistan started its own channel, Geo TV in October 2004.⁶ As they have a very firm base in domestic media culture, their program started to attain public attention. Afterwards the result was a rapid increase in private Television and Radio channels which is envisaged above in Table 1. Thus the universal growth of electronic media has unquestionably reached the world's sixth largest nation, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. And the possibilities that the new technologies will contribute to a transformation in the entire media landscape started landing (Weiss, 2008). "For so long print newspapers were the sole media channel in Pakistan", said Sami Abraham, a correspondent of Geo TV in Washington, "and because of the nation's high number of illiterates and rural residents, the news would just not reach the masses. But now, nearly everyone can watch or listen", he said. "And it is really mobilizing people" (ibid). So the first decade of twenty first century brought a revolution in Pakistan where media influence on politics and policy issues became an undeniable factor. This is the start of the mediatization of Pakistani Politics. Fahad Hussain, a leading journalist and analyst, locates the recent position of media as, "What we are seeing in Pakistan right now is a very silent slow revolution. In this revolution the people are taking power from the state. One of the channels through which it is happening is the news media. So, it happened as a gradual transformation of Pakistan society with the media being

the engine of change right now. That is happening in front of our eyes and we are going to start seeing the impact of this gradual silent revolution in the next few years to come” (Jahangir, 2009).

To say that the media have important cognitive and agenda setting effects in Pakistan’s political sphere, in contemporary scene, after the participation of media in recent political crisis, is stating the obvious. However, as we mentioned earlier, the process of mediatization cannot be categorized globally. Nevertheless an introduction of work on Mediatization by Jesper Strömbäck may help us to design an indigenous theoretical and structural framework for mediatization of politics in Pakistan. Strömbäck, a Swedish professor of media studies, in his research took a step further in this new domain and demarcated the process of mediatization in to four phases (Strömbäck, 2008). According to Strömbäck the mediatization is a multidimensional and inherently process-oriented concept and that it is possible to make a distinction between its various four phases of mediatization where media gradually develops itself in a state. Strömbäck devised a framework which divides the process of mediatization in to four phases, elaborated as follows:

- 1) In first phase, media constitutes the dominant source of information and channel of communication between the governors and the governed. The first phase—when politics has become mediated—should mainly be understood as a prerequisite for the successive phases of mediatization.
- 2) In second phase, the media becomes more independent of governmental or other political bodies and, consequently, have begun to be governed according to the media logic, rather than according to any political logic. This phase is also characterized by increasing journalistic professionalization and growing commercialization in media industry.
- 3) In third phase the media becomes more independent and important in a manner that political actors have to adopt the media, rather than the other way around. If media was semi-independent and politics had an upper hand in the second phase, then now its media who has an upper hand. This trend is opposed by the political powers as an inertia force, but in the later stage, they start to increase their skills in news management by professional methods like ‘Spinning’.
- 4) The fourth and last phase of mediatization is attained when political and other social actors not only adapt to the media logic and the predominant news values, but also *internalize* these and, more or less consciously, allow the media logic and the standards of newsworthiness to become a built-in part of the governing political processes. So this phase compels the political actors to start professionalization of politics to meet the needs of media.

Applying this organizational framework on our domestic scenario makes our study easier to comprehend theoretically, the process of mediatization in politics of Pakistan. Media, throughout the history of independence movement from British colonialism to the establishment of a nation-state, remained as a major source of information between the rulers and the public. However due to state control of broadcast journalism, a strict censorship on private print media, and inability of majority of population in Pakistan to get information from print media, due to prevalent illiteracy, were some basic characteristics due to which media was failed to deliver quality and trustworthy information of the public affairs and policy issues to the target audiences. A majority of population was relying on *BBC Urdu*, a radio service by British Broadcasting Company, which they considered more reliable as out of state censorship. However in late 1980s and early 1990s print media was getting more and more space in Pakistani politics by their quasi-independent editorial policies. But still they were in the first phase of mediatization of political setup in Pakistan.

At the start of twenty first century the advent of media revolution was there in Pakistan. The start of private news channel, their independence from state censorship and their liberal, reliable and popular coverage of major political issues were, in fact, a structural change of mediatization of politics from first to second phase, as devised by Strömbäck's above-mentioned model. The print media, henceforth following the parallel lines with broadcast media, managed to come out of political logic. Both print and broadcast media are now setting the news management, largely by the media logic and in order to gain more popularity in their respective audiences. Though this stage still lacks the professionalization of journalism up to a considerable term, however the commercialization of media industry is in full bloom. And media, particularly the broadcast one, is trying in all manners to enhance their resources by increasing popularity among audiences and viewers.

The performance of media in recent politically belligerent years in Pakistan was again showing, in theoretical term, a transition period. Their direct role in reinstatement of CJ and other judges, the failure of ruling junta to control the flow of information and to mold the public opinion, made by these media coverage, all shows that a gradual transformation of mediatization is taking place, from second to third phase. Though this phase is not completed, yet it is actively in action. The recent event of *Swat Girl Video*, showed an active transition where media logic is trying to take an upper hand on political logic.

This change in the media environment was appraised, generally, by all fractions of society and politics in Pakistan. Political leadership found an effective medium to communicate to the public at large. The ruling junta was, on every forum, proudly taking credit of this media independence. The opposition and leftist

elements are very happy to find themselves, no more *persona non grata* in visual medium of communication. There was a lack of critical evaluation of this change in media environment. Establishment, as well as the public at large thought that this is end of the story. Absence of any research-oriented studies on new development of media in Pakistani academia was, also, a failure to foresight of this development. No one knows that media development has still to cover more phases. So an opposition wave in some portions of society and politics occurred, particularly after the long march coverage and more recently in the episode of Swat girl video (Rumi, 2009). Journalists and analyst on every medium, particular in Print media, started to criticize the media free coverage, which was for them free from any past tradition or journalistic ethics. Any *ensemble* study of these critics showed that they, the critics, divided the journalists in two broad categories, that is, *Liberal fascists* and *Media Mujahidin* (Mir, 2009). Interestingly enough, no one talked about the media logic playing primarily in these coverage episodes. However in academic terms we may apply these critics to see the upgrading of mediatization in politics of Pakistan from second phase to third phase and the respective *inertia* opposition to this transformation. In an age of globalization, nevertheless, Pakistani media will have to see some more milestones in their destination to opt a western-based model of mediatization.

Conclusion

“As politics became increasingly mediatized”, Strömbäck concludes his research on mediatization, “the important question no longer is related to the independence of the media from politics and society, the important question becomes the independence of politics and society from media” (Strömbäck, 2008.p. 228). As the western academia started debate on the hypothesis of post- mediatization, the Pakistani academia, regrettably, is still lacking in framework analysis and theoretical studies on mediatization of politics at home ground. This creates a confusion in analysis of Pakistani media experts to elaborate the growing influence, media applying on all fields of society, religion, culture, economy and politics in Pakistan. This study, though tries to start the systemic analysis of Pakistani media, a lot remained here to be done in order to find a clear picture of media development in Pakistan. Growing influence of media is certainly a unmixed blessing for this nation,who, since independence, has remained in visible or invisible authoritarian regimes which deprived herself the basic rights of self-expression and determination. Pakistani media ,with its relative independence , has become, or is tending to become, a trend setter, for political and social discourse in the country. Nevertheless the situation in media industry is not as perfect as to conclude it a success story.

Hegemony of traditional journalists in the key positions of media industry and their inertia opposition to new developments, lack of professionalization in new heroes of broadcast media, and the inside or outside 'Flake' received by this newly independent media are some of basic reasons of its quasi-success story. Feed back system in media organizations in internal level, and the demand of globalization at external level, are very effective, nevertheless, for self-accountability and refurbishing process. One can expect, due to the presence of these two above-mentioned trends, to see a more professionalized media in the years to come.

Notes:

¹ Unfortunately almost all the work on Pakistani media, by Pakistani media scholars, has been done in descriptive narration of news media development. We cannot find a sufficient number of books or research papers on systemic and/or analytical study of Pakistani media. This study is designed to be just a first drop in the right direction.

² Wazeernaama is a slang word used often to describe the lengthy and undue coverage given to tiny and unimportant activities of the ministers, without any newsworthiness, in PTV's news bulletins.

³ Cable television is a system of providing television to consumers via radio frequency signals transmitted to televisions through fixed optical fibers or coaxial cables as opposed to the over-the-air method used in traditional television broadcasting (via radio waves) in which a television antenna is required.

⁴ An interesting factor, to be mentioned, at this point is that Geo TV, the most popular Channel in Pakistan has no DSNG System so far.

⁵ These channels do not provide publicly the rates they charge for advertisement. Yet the writer's personal experience, while working in the Geo TV, shows increase of rates in prime time slot from Rupees 5000 to 25000 per minute approximately.

⁶ Their test transmission started from 14th of August, 2004, but 1st of October, 2004 was their start of formal transmission.

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Ahmed Rashid's *Descent into Chaos*

Reviewed by David Waterman

Rashid, Ahmed. *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. New York: Viking/Penguin, 2008. 484 pages, ISBN: 978-0-670-01970-0.

Ahmed Rashid's latest book, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, continues this Pakistani journalist's long-term project regarding the geopolitics of Central Asia. This detailed study is the result of careful research by a hands-on journalist who has an intimate knowledge of the terrain he covers and the people of whom he speaks. The Introduction, "Imperial Overreach and Nation Building," frames the essential question which organizes the rest of the book: Why is the terrorist threat now, seven years after 9/11, even greater than it was in 2001? The failure of nation building is, according to Rashid, the principal reason for this disaster.

Part One is entitled "9/11 and War," and begins with the portrait of Hamid Karzai, the "man with a mission," who would become Afghanistan's president. It also briefly traces some of the region's history before bringing Afghanistan into the Cold War with the Russian invasion, not forgetting the competing interests of various tribes, the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. Rashid then expands upon the long-running mistrust between the United States and Pakistan, especially as concerns the ISI's support of the Taliban while pledging cooperation in the hunt for extremists, as well as the thorny issue of nuclear proliferation. Next, Pervez Musharraf's role is detailed, who is described as a schizophrenic by the author. According to him, he was unable to carry out reforms due to the army's support of religious extremist groups, *jihadis* "which would become the biggest obstacle to reform and nation building at home" (47). US involvement in Afghanistan, after 9/11, was to be undermined almost immediately by the US invasion of Iraq, and later military successes further undermined by the Bush administration's rejection of nation building in a post-Taliban Afghanistan (74). Part One concludes with an assessment of US strategic mistakes, such as the preventable escape of Taliban and al Qaeda leaders in Kunduz and Tora Bora, as well as human rights violations

regarding prisoner transfers (which would fuel pro-Taliban sentiments); the section closes with Karzai's official nomination as president.

Part Two, "The Politics of the Post-9/11 World," dwells first on the tense relations between the neighboring nuclear powers, India and Pakistan, often with Kashmir as the point of contention: at least four wars have already been fought since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Liberal Pakistanis understood what the army did not, that "after 9/11 the international community would have zero tolerance for Islamic extremism," and hence the world was now keenly watching what Pakistan would do in the fight against militants (115), even as Musharraf continued to use extremists as a means of bringing India to a settlement (124). Rashid then describes the role of warlords in Afghanistan, supported by Washington but notoriously corrupt and uninterested in nation building, at a time when the country ranks near the bottom of the Human Development Index (130). "Musharraf's Lost Moment" describes US political expediency – not only in Pakistan but in five Central Asian states – and the resulting authoritarian policies

"The Failure of Nation Building" is the subject of Part Three. It describes Afghanistan's dire situation after more than two decades of war, and Kofi Annan's insistence on the link between peacekeeping and nation building, even as reconstruction projects were contracted out to people whom Rashid calls Washington's "Beltway bandits," well-known for corruption, incompetence and overcharging (173-174). In the context of nation building, Rashid reminds us that security means more than soldiers patrolling the streets: "human security" means jobs, education, food, and sustainable institutions, a long-term strategy effectively ignored by US policy (196-197). In January 2004, a new Constitution was adopted, but other problems – increased Taliban activity and booming opium production among them – muted its reception (218). Pakistan's "double dealing" with Islamic extremists again comes to the fore, as Islamabad had predicted a short term of US influence in Kabul, which would then allow Pakistan to have more sway in Afghanistan's governance, although Islamabad would come to regret its collaboration with extremists (219). Once again, Washington's turning a blind eye would allow the Taliban to gain strength, especially in the months preceding the US election in 2004, when Rumsfeld denied the obvious insurgency (252).

Part Four, "Descent into Chaos," begins by describing the seven tribal agencies (FATA) between Afghanistan and Pakistan as "terrorism central," as well as a short history of their administration, inherited from the British Raj (265-266). In this undeveloped region, forgotten by most – and certainly by US policymakers – *madrassas* are the only option for education, and hence very popular (272). Rashid reminds us that most recent al Qaeda plots are connected to FATA, as it is a breeding ground for recruiting and training militants (278). He goes on to say that the

US policy of mistreating the enemy combatants, or secret renditions of prisoners, promoted hatred against America and hence furthered the cause of extremist groups within the region, a loss of American credibility which will take years to restore (293-294). Then we are reminded that the failure of nation building was also at least partly to blame on the failure to deal with the drug trade, the relationship of opium, warlords and insecurity, as well as the large-scale involvement in drug trafficking by politicians, administrators and the police (318; 324). Rashid dedicates a chapter to the loss of Uzbekistan, a recipient of US aid and a partner country for the US program of secret renditions, blaming the Bush Administration's policy of prioritizing "security" at the expense of nation building, a policy which then allowed Russia and China to develop their sphere of influence in Central Asia. Finally, the lack of commitment is expanded to include NATO as well, citing their numerous caveats limiting engagement, thus allowing increased operational flexibility for the Taliban (354).

The book's Conclusion recalls Benazir Bhutto's assassination in December 2007, and the fragility of progress in Pakistan and Afghanistan that her death represents (374). A good deal of hope, especially regarding a power-sharing arrangement, died with Bhutto. Threats to Musharraf's power came from the courts, as well as from Islamic extremists after the government's attack on the Red Mosque, and the ensuing state of emergency further alienated him from Pakistan's citizenry, ultimately resulting in the election of Asif Ali Zardari's Pakistan People's Party, with 120 seats in the National Assembly (390). As a consequence of the troubled history that the book deals with, it ends with some understandably pessimistic forecasts for the future of the region, especially if we do not heed the lessons which could be learned from the multitude of mistakes which have been made in Central Asia since 1947. Included in this detailed study are several maps (geographic / demographic), a glossary and guide to acronyms, copious notes, a long list of suggested books for further research, and a complete index. Ahmed Rashid's book is required reading for all serious students of Central Asia, especially those interested in current geopolitics and the importance, on a global scale, of this region for the future. Ahmed Rashid is to be congratulated on a work of practical, real-world importance.

Reading *River of Fire* as a North-American Student

Reviewed by Deirdre Manion-Fischer

Hyder, Qurratulain. *River of Fire*. New York: New Directions Books, 1998. 428 pages, ISBN: 978-0-8112-1533-6.

Though written about half a century ago and “transcreated” into English from the Urdu in 1998, Qurratulain Hyder’s *Aag Ka Daria (River of Fire)* provides new challenges to students from North American universities. The novel tells the story of the personal quests of four main characters across two millennia of Indian history. Gautam, Kamal, Cyril, and Champa appear as different people throughout history. The second half of the novel takes place in the present day, the time of writing, within a decade of Partition, and represents its psychological impact on the characters.

What do North American students know about the history of India? They know Gandhi’s life story, perhaps from the 1982 film starring Ben Kingsley. And thus they know of India’s independence from Britain along with Partition and the violent conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. The latter they hear of in the news. They probably saw *Slumdog Millionaire*, which portrays a riot scene. They may have heard of sati, the custom of widow immolation allegedly ended by the morally upright Europeans. The sources of knowledge, then, for the averagely informed North American student, include movies, television, and if they are lucky, university courses.

Hyder’s novel provides little context to the story that would inform readers unfamiliar with the cultural history of India. They must approach it from a position of at least some background knowledge. The novel thus encourages students to further research the history of India, in order to better understand the story. The novel becomes even more complicated because it subverts previous knowledge of India such students may possess. In the mainstream media, over and over, narratives of economic strife and the lingering effects of colonialism are buried in favor of philosophical, religious or ethnic differences, guiltless explanations of conflicts. The story of post-partition violence between Hindus and Muslims might be familiar to students in the United States, but an earlier history is less so. Students familiar

with the Western cultural tradition of grand narratives extending from the history of Ancient Greeks and Romans through the sweep of European history, up through basic American and British literature have not been much exposed to the histories of other nations. However, just from reading the novel, students learn that other cultural histories exist, as complicated and contradictory as their own, which are equally important in shaping the present situations of other parts of the world.

North American students can more easily relate to other aspects of the novel. Though the timescale of the novel spans two millennia, much beyond a human lifetime, anyone can relate to each of the characters' personal quests and emotional attachments. Relationships between the four main characters, Gautam, Kamal, Champa, and Cyril change throughout the course of the novel. Their changing relationships stand in for the progress of the course of history, the river of fire. Much that happens in history is doomed to be forgotten, leaving only fragments. For example, Hyder represents certain details that are picked up later, like the statue of Champa that Gautam created around 400 BC during the time of power struggles of various Mughal emperors, which is then seen in a museum by the characters in the present time. For many of the characters, art, music and learning were important. They concerned themselves with unrequited love, their economic security, and their sense of identity as it related to their nationality, their religion, and ethnic group. The characters possess certain traits that carry through their various iterations: Gautam, an artist; Cyril, a representation of the conflicted colonizer, Champa, a proud yet displaced woman, the object of love who comes into her own by the end; and Kamal, a misfit and a Muslim.

In the course of history and for the characters, Hyder represented Partition as one trauma in a series of traumas. Partition happens in the space between chapters, as if the author considered her audience already familiar with the events. In the second half of the novel, which deals with the "present time" of writing, a few more characters appear. Hyder's contemporaries criticized her for focusing on the upper middle classes and leaving out the physical violence of Partition. However, this aspect of Partition had already been adequately captured and described by others. Instead, Hyder chooses to represent the psychological impact on her characters. She wrote from her own experience, of being in her early twenties at the time of Partition. One of the characters, the journalist Talat, interviewed Oscar Wilde's granddaughter, the Queen's beautician, as did Hyder, while working as a journalist in London. Another strong female character, Champa Ahmed, longed to --yet never did -- fit in among the other main female characters because of her lower class. She couldn't hide her disdain for them. Near the end of the novel, when some members of the group of friends begin to relocate to Pakistan, while she remains behind in London, Champa wanders to different places she used to hang around, such as a

coffee house and the BBC Canteen, announcing her name. No one knows who she is, and this upsets her, though she knows her actions seem ridiculous.

The emotional center, or climax of the novel, occurs when Kamal, as a Muslim in India, realizes he has become “stateless.” He must confront the fact that his connection to his own country, India, has been literally severed. What else could define his relationship to the country of his birth? Kamal feels he has nothing left. In Pakistan too, he fears the mistrust of those more “at home” than he. Anyone could recognize his anguish, even those who have not endured something similar. My own experience of growing up in Quebec during the referendum in 1995, the only serious discussion of secession in North America since the American Civil War, seems barely comparable. As an Anglophone born in Montreal to American parents who spent part of her time in Ohio, I had somewhat more than the usual difficulty with national identity. If Quebec had separated from Canada, I would have felt as Kamal did, a stranger in the land of my birth. It seems crazy to imagine such things happening here and now in the West, which Kamal and his friends went through and which exist in living memory for many in India and Pakistan. American students know the bloody history of their country’s Civil War, but that belongs to a far-off time. Hyder’s book makes history present, not in the actual memories of her characters, but in their collective cultural memory, which they cannot quite forget. Histories are not merely composed of grand narratives. Ordinary people must live their lives and establish their identities in times when such narratives become unstable.

Freedom

by Hananah Zaheer

It has been fifty years since Independence, and I am still waiting to die.

I sit in the veranda, in front of the TV, propped up by the wall of pillows behind me, and watch the parade while my granddaughters comb my hair. The soldiers, mere boys, are marching across the screen, feet stomping the ground in rhythm. My granddaughters are whispering about those boys and uniforms and breasts and things I would slap them for if I still had the will to move my hands. They see the determination in the set lines of their jaws, hard chests under those starched khakis. I cannot resist watching either, although my heart beats faster not the sight of the medals and insignia that adorn their chests and foreheads like a smattering of bullet holes, but at the knowledge of what these honorable men are capable of.

Look Dadi, my granddaughters say, there's Dada. And they giggle again. They think I am senile. They think that I might see a semblance of my own husband in the faces of these boys. But I've known he would never return ever since he boarded the train in '46, dressed in his army best, on his way to a ship embarking for England. I wrote him letters telling him that we were having another child, that the shape of my stomach was different this time and each time when the letter came back I told my boys to be patient-- he will return-- and I hid the envelopes with his name scratched out and the words "addressee unknown" scribbled across in a slanted handwriting that looked so much like his. I knew of his absence anew when the sounds of an angry mob banging on my door woke me and my children in the middle of the night ten months later, and I dragged the three boys, paralyzed by fear, and my newborn daughter out the back door into the streets of Batala. Amidst screams, we ran from the swinging scythes and the blazing torches, confused, and not yet realizing that the mere shifting of the clock hands to usher in the new day had declared us strangers in our own country. We were no longer the same; we became Muslims, traitors, enemies: Pakistanis.

To my granddaughters, my life is inconsequential. At best, I am a living wall to echo ideas off, an empty silent place to vent their anger against their father's strictness. In this house I am a guest, sometimes their plaything. A husbandless, breastless, lifeless weight. They dress me, feed me, arrange me on the bed as if I was a doll. They bring oils and combs and brush and braid my hair into intricate designs as if I were a bride going to my wedding bed. When the comb gets tangled in a resistant knot, they pull, sighing and clucking their tongues as if I were a disobedient child. I remain quiet, and I wonder what kind of mothers they will make. I wonder if they would know how to sacrifice for their children.

On the television, the soldiers are marching, flags raised. They are proud. The whole country is in celebration of surviving fifty years. I hear speeches and songs, and stories of the heroic escapes of the victims of Partition. Later, they will show the same interviews that I see every year. The same faces, familiar in the way their eyes dart from their hands to the sights only they remember, unable to forget, their voices trembling with the echo of sounds they still hear, my compatriots in this life that has become a land of banishment. And I will relive the night again, silently, while my son's wife will hold her daughters close and they will all shed tears in sympathy. They will mourn the dead wives, and the lost sons, the severed limbs. They will fiercely declare patriotism, and believe the soldiers—those ordinary men—as they pledge to protect their countrymen, their family, swearing this on the graves of their mothers. They will do all this and not look my way once.

And I will try to read my son's eyes as he stares through me, unblinking, hands buried under his legs. I'm sorry, I will think. I loved you best, I will reason, I was Ebrahim and you were the chosen one.

I wonder if these soldiers think about death as they lay in their wives' arms late at night, and what they would be willing to do in the name of justice, if they would surround a mother stumbling through the streets and, driven by visions of revenge and hatred, slice the air with their swords and daggers and offer her a choice, benevolently: The baby or the boy.

When my granddaughter bends to pick up my rosary from the floor, I can see her chest. Round, young flesh, ready to be suckled. I feel bile rise in my throat.

She bends lower, reaching under the string bed for something that has caught her eye. Her hair falls away from her neck and from where I sit, the red thread on which she wears a pendant looks like a thin line of blood. A fine slice of the sword, nothing like the unskilled hacking that severs a breast from a chest. She laughs, delighted by the discovery of a missing earring, and swings her hair back over her neck. Her eyes, when she looks up, are baby girl eyes, soft and sweet and innocent. I feel a pull in my own barren chest that belies my womanhood. I want to pull her to me, hold her there. But she stands up and moves away.

My son moves through this house like a quiet, ever-present shadow. He never says the words, but I know that he remembers that night. I see it in the way he holds his children to him, the fierceness with which he kisses the tops of their heads, his reluctance to let go until they say ‘Abba, that hurts.’ And I know it by the way we find lesser and lesser things to speak about since his first child was born sixteen years ago. He sits next to me, and speaks with his daughters, and holds his son in his lap, and occasionally his hand, a smile, wanders my way, next to him, and he leans over and says, ‘Amma, you okay?’

He is a dutiful son, and a good father.

But can he understand what it is like to look at two children, one your life, the other your heart, both your flesh, and try to decide which one you would let die, and which one your husband might like to see if he ever returned?

Thunder rumbles like cannons overhead and my granddaughters are worried. I can hear the frowns in their voices. The flag will get wet, they say, and what will happen to the mela? They cannot bear the thought of missing the fair, of not holding their father’s arms as they make their way through an avenue of admiring eyes. Their new green and white clothes, the hair braided and scented with coconut oil, the henna on their hands, it will all be wasted. Last night, they brought me henna too, as I sat on my perch in the veranda, the TV flashing in front; giggling behind clenched mouths, they drew names in the vines and flowers that crawled over my hands. I felt their hands holding mine and, because I closed my eyes, I could imagine what it would have been like if it had been my daughter holding my hand, turning it over to smell the henna, her soft breath hovering over my palm.

My daughter was light, a small and quiet load in my arms. It was my youngest son I had to worry about giving us away. When the men, no longer British

soldiers, but mere men who knew nothing more than to follow orders and to kill, took to the streets, we crouched, trembling, behind bushes along the sides of roads, too afraid to breathe, I clamped my hand over the youngest's mouth. He fought to free himself, and his brothers held him down. Tears poured down his cheek and I slapped him. I wanted him to be strong, like his father, like his brothers. Instead he cried like the girl that my husband had wished he was.

And the pack of hunters heard him.

I wanted my children to live. So I told them to run. The older two listened, but not him. He stayed, loyal, scared, child that he was; he found his place behind my legs and I felt his hands on my knees, shaking.

My grandson sidles up to my perch. I can see the mischievousness in his eyes. He slaps his sister's knee, lightly, and waits to see if she reacts. I can sense the sting of the little hand in her eyes, but she is singing patriotic songs along with the TV and doesn't protest. I look at her, trying to convey sympathy with my eyes. But her eyes are glued, dreaming, enchanted by the boys on the screen. I drop my eyes. My grandson has heavy hands, just like his father. He runs the thick, long fingers along the edge of my veil. It seems that he wants to linger. If he sat next to me, he might ask me for stories from when his father was young. I could tell him about the house in Batala and the guava tree my sons liked to climb in the front yard. I could tell him about his father, who was mischievous just like him, and whom I spent hours sitting by at night, watching as he struggled against his dreams, his face breaking into soundless screams even years afterwards. Until he became a man. Suddenly, overnight it seemed, he no longer needed me to comfort him after his nightmares, no longer wanted my hand resting on his chest as he awoke, panting. And I never found the courage to soothe his hurt. I just trudged on, pretending it never happened, but knowing it all along in the way my son's eyes started to question me, as if he was trying, and failing, to understand.

I lift my head. My grandson grins and slaps my hand before he bounds away, off to his corner, to behead another doll that his sisters are missing.

When my husband left, the women had all thought I should die too; what is a woman abandoned by her husband? That night, when the men, mockingly still dressed in the shirts that denoted their ranks and regiments, surrounded me, they told me the same thing. But I wanted life.

I bore it willingly when they stuck their swords under my shirt and ran the tips in painful lines down my chest. I pushed my son's head lower when they

snatched away my veil, and tore the front of my shirt open. My daughter wailed when they pushed me to the ground and forced themselves into me, and I would have shed tears also if I had not been struggling to recognize in those familiar faces any hints of neighbors, friends' husbands, the fathers of my sons' playmates. I bore it all so that they might allow my children freedom. But they wanted blood.

I feel a pull around my neck, like tiny soft arms slipping around me from behind. I want to tilt my head back, to find a soft cheek, a head fragrant with almond oil. But my granddaughters are gathering up my hair, tying up the loose ends. They giggle away, slap their little brother on their way into their room. I watch him wail, wipe his tears with the back of his hands, then bound off to his parents' room. His steps are brisk, the motion of his legs sharp, quick. I am left alone in the veranda. The voices from the TV echo against hollows inside my head, interrupting, as I lean forward and listen for footsteps returning.

I hear my son laugh, a deep, loud happy sound, and I wonder if this year will be different, if this time we will resurrect the question that lies between us.

Stunned by the suddenness with which my daughter stopped screaming when the sword slid across her neck, I didn't remember to look for my youngest son until hours later.

Stumbling, bleeding, I found him in the street behind our house. He lay on top of the breastless, faceless body of another woman, his head buried in the crook of her arm. I pulled him out, fighting his struggling limbs with fists. When his body went limp, I kneeled before him, broken. He stared up at me, body shaking, eyes wide with accusation. I tried to speak, but it seemed that the men had cut off my tongue along with my breasts.

I could not tell him why I had pushed him forward when the men had held a knife to my throat, asking me to choose, why I had called his name, panicking, when he ran, why I yelled at him to stop for my sake, when we both knew what I was asking of him. And so I stared back at him. Perhaps if the world had not been whirling around me, I might have held him against me, as a mother should. But all that echoed inside my head was a scream so loud that I could feel it piercing every nerve, silencing every thought. So I held his hand, and pulled him into the darkness. And we walked away.

My older sons forgot me like their father did. They could not remember that I held their hands when they trembled in fear at the sight of dead bodies littering our path, that when they ran, I made more noise so those men wouldn't hear their footsteps on the cobblestones. They never knew of the two years after partition that I spent sitting outside government offices, laying bare my desperation for all to see, begging for news of my children.

I sewed clothes, and I washed floors and with the money I saved, I looked for my sons. When I found them, they were men. They refused to recognize me, happy in the lives they had found, a fatherless, motherless freedom, so they stopped speaking to me. The youngest stayed by me, because he felt my guilt. This I know.

My granddaughters are emerging from their room, dressed alike, smiling alike, their eyes wide with suppressed excitement. They call to their father, and check each other for an errant wisp of hair, a wrinkle in the perfectly ironed clothes. Soon, I know I will hear the music from the streets outside; rambunctious children will ride their bicycles down the streets honking their horns and wailing songs of joy. As the sky becomes brighter, the sounds will become feverish, the smells more aggressive. Fruits and flowers and burning oil, smoldering wood, charred carcasses of goats and chickens, fresh blood.

My son emerges from the room with his wife. He is carrying his son on his shoulders. The family gathers near the front door, a combed and perfumed unit. They glimmer with such excitement that I have to look away, blinded that I am by their happiness. There is silence. I know they are all looking at me, trying to decide, the silent discussions hovering between them. I keep looking away, knowing I am not wanted, wondering if my son is thinking of the same things I am. I can hear the shuffling of feet as someone approaches. I look up to see him, his smile dark and old, kneeling down. My grandson sits on his shoulders. I hold back tears, try to read his mind. He lays one hand on my knee.

“Will you be okay alone, Amma? We won't be long.”

I search his eyes for meaning behind his words. I knew him so much better when he was little. I smile, wanting him to know that I remember. It is difficult to hold the smile for the trembling in my chin, but I try. He looks back at his family, his other hand rubbing his son's ankle. They wait at the door with impatient faces. It is a big day, and the celebrations will be bigger than the years before. I stay quiet, feeling the weight of his hand on my leg, remembering the same hand on my knee

so many years ago. I wonder if he remembers me as I used to be, if he remembers his sister.

His eyes look away from mine, start to dissolve into something familiar. Stay with me, I think. I want to hold him to me, to feel his heart beating against mine, to remember that I am, scarred, still a mother, and not a remnant of his past that he cannot bear to hold closely. A fly buzzes in and lands on his finger. He withdraws his hand, waves the fly off. My stomach feels hollow. A child cries somewhere, then quiets down. We sit, quietly, each awaiting a move from the other. My son sighs, glances at his family again. I sense him shifting, moving away before he even gets up.

“Stay.” The word is strange and intrusive as I speak it, even to my ears. Pick me, I am thinking, pick me even though I didn’t pick you. My throat, unused to demand, is constricting. I turn my head towards the wall, not wanting to see the shadow that has suddenly slid into my son’s eyes. I cannot let him see that his surprise stings. I pull my veil around me, feeling as naked as the day he and I crossed the border into Pakistan, blood and body peeking through tattered remnants, desperately trying to preserve whatever dignity I had remaining.

“You’ll be okay,” he says after a while, the words escaping his mouth quickly as he rises. “We won’t be too long.”

The family hurries out through the door, noises of excitement trailing behind them. The door creaks shut. I close my eyes, and wait.

An Excerpt from *Saffron Dreams: A Novel*

By Shaila Abdullah

November 2001

New York

I decided to carry out the first task on my list when fall was about to lose its hue.

All around me were walls of fog; it was just as well. This year the trees of the mid-Hudson Valley were reluctant to shed their leaves. A few fallen ones—the glowing golds, the bloodlike reds, the brazen browns, and the somber yellows—crackled under my feet, crisp and lifeless but not without a voice. There is an old saying that it will be a bad winter if the trees decide to hold on to their leaves.

I wanted to take this journey myself. Unseen. Unchallenged. The air outside was thick, buttressed by my decision, sparse in joy but swollen with complexities. It comforted me; tingled the soles of my feet. The feeling of heaviness that had been lingering for days was gone. I would have danced had I not been on a mission. I delighted in how clean my insides felt like they had just been laundered and wrung dry, soapy smell suspended in air. Invisible molecules tickled my nostrils and I sneezed at the thought.

I stopped by a toy store, its shutters down, occupants fast asleep. As I pressed my nose against the window, I marveled at the simple joys of childhood. My breath came in short waves and misted the window, creating tiny smoky bubbles of all sizes and shapes. I imagined being a toy horse, galloping on bound legs, destination firmly defined, thrilled with providence in my naiveté.

The subway ride was a quiet time for reflection with very few early commuters. I got off as if floating on air, tightening my *hijab* or veil around the back of my head. It had to be hysteria, this feeling within of clean joy one minute and debilitating sorrow the next. A sharp change in the jet stream will channel numerous storm systems into the Atlantic, the meteorologist had predicted. One was raging within me as I walked westward from Canal to West Street. I felt a restless quest to outrun my fate, grind it beneath my feet.

Pier 34 was abandoned when I reached its southern tip. I faced it with a welcoming smile.

It had the lure of a mother's breast for me, the air throbbing in suckling anticipation. I leaned my protruding belly against the barrier that divided me from the deep stillness below. Another step and my body could easily plummet into the murky depths. I was afraid to touch my abdomen; I wanted to leave its resident out of this. He should never feel responsible for what I was about to do. My mind was full of the possibilities of what life would have been if the towers hadn't crashed.

The wounded skyline in the distance had its edges softened by the early morning fog. Even the air approached the buildings carefully, with reverence. So much was lost. A cool breeze was blowing, providing a hint of the approaching winter. For a brief sickening moment, I debated on which should go—the veil or me.

I slid the *hijab* from around my neck. The wind felt chilly on my bare head. It was a new sensation. *You can do anything you set your mind to, Arissa Illahi*, a voice from the past whispered to me.

In a few hours, it would be another normal day. Was there such a thing anymore? I appreciated the predawn quietness and looked down at the river with meditated concentration. They said that a new layer of sediment composed of ash and dust had formed a permanent footprint on the river bed after the towers had collapsed. Undisturbed, it has become a constant geological reminder of the tragedy, now etched in history.

The wind tore the veil from my hand, making my task easier. I grasped the cold railing with one hand and swatted at the fleeting piece of my life with the other as the wind picked up speed. It teasingly brought the veil closer to my face. I could have grabbed it. The veil sailed down toward the depths, its grave.

I did not feel a sense of betrayal as I walked away from the pier, letting the wind dance with my hair for the first time. I pulled a few strands out of my eyes and looked back. The sun had just started to peek at the horizon, bleeding its crimson hue. It was a matter of perspective—to an onlooker I had removed my veil, but from where I stood, I had merely shifted it from my head to my heart.

"Khuda Hafiz," I breathed.

Who was I bidding farewell to? I wondered: the age-old tradition or the husband I had kept alive in my heart?

Apa's Painting

By Mehnaz Turner

1.

I ask my mother about Apa's painting
in English, she answers in Urdu, then it's
my turn to speak, but there at the crosswalk
between Lahore and Los Angeles, I pledge
allegiance to nothing though sometimes
I mix the two languages, even throw in a little
high school French, or the Arabic I learned
reading the Quran, my nine-year old head draped
in a scarf pulled from my mother's dresser.
I peer up at the canvas: ocean waves thrash
an archipelago of rocks. My mother tells me
Apa painted it before I knew how to say
fish or *pani* or Pakistan, before I became
this chest of torn up maps. In my body the Pacific
edges into Islamabad, Hollywood's lodged
in the throat of the Punjab. My grandmother's
painting lives in this garage in Woodland Hills,
propped up against a box of fashion magazines.
The image speaks in twelve shades of blue,
like a storm of languages without a tongue.
The sight engulfs me, unpledged.
The coastline shadowed—no words, no light.

2.

The coastline shadowed—no words, no light.
The sight engulfs me, unpledged.
The image speaks in twelve shades of blue,

like a storm of languages without a tongue.
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in Woodland Hills, propped up against a box
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and Los Angeles, I pledge allegiance to nothing
though sometimes I mix the two languages, even
throw in a little high school French, or the Arabic
I learned reading the Quran, my nine-year old head
draped in a scarf pulled from my mother's dresser.

A Hospital Visit

By Aneesa Hussain

They come in to
Look at me
A spectacle on a
Petri dish,
Yellowed
Bony
Silent.
Their faces
Straight,
Eyes quizzical
White coats
Fluttering back
And forth
Like wings.

I sit and stare,
IV pulsating through
My veins, sweat
Trickling down my back
I feel the shame,
The shame of the
Visible hair on my
Legs,
The shame of being
Kept prisoner for a
Week,
The shame of being
Caught sick.

I have memories of bloody IVs,
Of kosher jello,
Of the girl next to me
Who had an operation.
Memories of my mother staying with
Me day and night,
Resting only a few hours
On a chair within my sight.

The white coats come again.
How old is she? One of them
Whispers to the other.
12, I think, another says.
I wonder if she speaks English,
The other says.

Perhaps Said had got it right.
I'm the exotic oriental,
The eastern other.
"Fucking Indians" the
nurse says to us later
as we close the curtains for
privacy and comfort.

A few white coats
walk by again and peep in.
Oh no, she's Arab, I think.
Her name is Muslim, they say.
I've lost my sense of self.
I'm an Indian and an Arab.
The best place to be racially
Profiled is when you're in
The hospital
And sick.
They think it heals your wounds
When they assume
Who you are.
They can only assume
Because you're 12 and

Sick and do not talk back
That you are what they think
You are.

This is when you take back
Your words,
Of singing so loud
That even you were frightened
That you are not fine,
And wonder if you will be okay
although it is another
Fine day.
Your mother and the white coats
Didn't think twice.
They took you in
And treated you.
You were their belonging
For a week.
An object to be tampered with,
A rat in a cage,
A spectacle on a petri dish.
You were treated in silence
Until you could be taken home
To yourself
with medicine
To heal the loss of your integrity,
Your memory of yourself
Before the loss of your identity.

HOSHRUBA: The Land and the Tilism¹

Translated by Musharraf Ali Farooqi

A First Translation of the World's First Magical Fantasy Epic "Tilism-e Hoshruha" (1883-1893) by Muhammad Husain Jah

Introduction

The world's first and longest magical fantasy Hoshruha was compiled in the Urdu language by two of its greatest prose writers. Spread over eight thousand pages, it reached the summits of popularity and acclaim never attained by any other epic in the history of Urdu literature. But the richness of its language and its length deterred translations for more than one hundred and twenty-five years.

Filled with dazzling illusions and occult realms inhabited by powerful sorceresses and diabolic monsters, Hoshruha had a fixed life, and a designated conqueror who would use its magical key to unravel it one day.

The first book of the Hoshruha series begins with the giant Laqa entering Hoshruha's protection, and its sorcerer emperor finding himself at war with Laqa's arch fiend, Amir Hamza, the Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction, who pursues the giant with his numerous tricksters and a young prince—the yet to be known conqueror-designate of Hoshruha. When the prince is kidnapped by the devious trickster girls sent by the sorcerer emperor, it falls to an extraordinary trickster and a rebel sorceress to continue his mission.

Of the False God Laqa Seeking Refuge With King Suleiman Amber-Hair of Mount Agate, and of Amir Hamza's Armies Arriving There in Pursuit of Him

*Sing O minstrel for my cup of life brims over
Under the nine vaults of heaven
From the revolutions of cosmos I intone like the pipe
At the fate of Jamshed and the fortunes of Kaikhusru*

*The master of discourse intricate and obscure
Has masterly adorned the lovely bride of the narrative*

The cupbearers of nocturnal revelries and bibbers from the cup of inspiration pour the vermilion wine of inscription into the paper's goblet thus:

When Amir Hamza's armies drove away the false god Laqa from his previous abode, Bakhtiarak, the devil-designate of Laqa's court and the man of ill council, advised Laqa to head to the dominions of King Suleiman Amber-Hair of Mount Agate who was the master of innumerable armies and mighty warriors. The lands of Mount Agate were linked to Hoshruha, the tilism ruled by its master Emperor Afrasiyab.

*He is the lord of throne, insignia and crown
Lord of the fish in the sea and moon in the heavens
His grandeur is complete without the aid of coronet
At his name the heavens tremble and present tribute*

Laqa followed the iniquitous Bakhtiarak's advice and headed for the fortress city of Mount Agate. At the end of his long trek, when he arrived near its borders, the spies of King Suleiman Amber-Hair alerted him. The monarch decorated the city with lights, readied trays of gold and jewels for offerings, and marched out with his retinue to greet Laqa.

Suleiman Amber-Hair brought Laqa into the fortress city and conducted him into the royal palace with great fanfare. Nobles, ministers of state and privy councillors paid their respects to Laqa. The false god was seated on the royal throne encrusted with precious and rare jewels and gave audience within the cluster of dancers, silver-thighed cupbearers, and honey-tongued and jovial singers, whose sweet strains caused every eye and ear to become transfixed with wonder. Before long, the rounds of red wine made everyone forgetful of the fickle ways of time.

Next, the three commanders of King Suleiman Amber-Hair's armies presented themselves. They were:

Manzur Crow-Eye – Nephew to King Suleiman and master of several hundred thousand warriors

Nazir Crow-Eye – Nephew to King Suleiman and master of several hundred thousand warriors

Lalan Red-Robe – Supreme Commander of King Suleiman's armies and unparalleled in the arts of war

These commanders prostrated themselves before Laqa and expressed their readiness to wager their heads and scatter their lives in his service. They reassured him that he could reside in Mount Agate without the least anxiety. Laqa took great comfort from their pledges and decided to make his home in Mount Agate. King Suleiman Amber-Hair threw a feast of celebration in Laqa's honor, and bowed his head in submission to his service.

Amir Hamza had dispatched four fleet-footed and zephyr-paced spies after Laqa the damned when he fled before his victorious armies:

Namian Khaibari

Tomian Khaibari

Sarhang Makki

Abu Tahir the Blood-Spiller

These spies were given instructions to discover where that bird of ill fortune had found a roost, and to gather particulars of the kingdom whose sovereign had offered him refuge. Amir Hamza's spies had disguised themselves and accompanied Laqa, and were present in the court of Suleiman Amber-Hair at that very moment. They listened to the presentations of Suleiman Amber-Hair's commanders and, after collecting all the particulars about the fortress city of Mount Agate and its military strength, hastened out of the fortress as quick as lightning and swift as wind to make their report.

—

Amir Hamza was seated with King Saad in the Pavilion of Suleiman. Its panels had been raised to allow them a view of the plains and their pleasant scenery. The spies arrived in great haste before King Saad, with their lips chapped and temples pulsating. They bowed their heads at the designated station, kissed the ground at his feet with lips of servitude and, raising their hands in visiting benedictions and prayers on the king, began:

“O Majestic and Just King,

May your excellence last as long as the sun in the heavens

May you keep goblets company as long as there's another morn

For as long as the crown of life remains on Khizr's head

May your fortunes remain as lofty as those of Alexander.”

The messengers narrated with accuracy and detail all that they had witnessed: “The ill-fated foe Laqa that turned tail before your triumphant armies, that star-crossed, death-bound bear adrift in the desert of darkness, has arrived in Mount

Agate and sought residence there. The king of that land has offered him refuge and words of support.”

King Saad turned his gaze toward his commander-in-chief, Amir Hamza, who ordered the trickster, Amar Ayyar, to send for the camp commander, Aadi, and have the advance camp dispatched toward Mount Agate.

Upon the venerable commander’s orders, the signal of departure was sounded in the triumph-bearing army. The braves decked themselves with arms and armor and prepared to march.

*The cities of Greece and Syria shook to their foundations
With such preparations the advance camp was provisioned*

Platoons, troopers mounted on Arabian horses and countless foot-soldiers began marching toward Mount Agate with majestic mien. The army’s bazaars were also folded up and sent to the destination. Tents, pavilions and other court furniture were loaded up for transportation on camels and mules. The king, with his illustrious commanders, and Amir Hamza, with his peerless tricksters, headed out to lead the armies.

*In the manner the spring gale issues out
To the desert the majestic entourage departed*

After marching for one day and bivouacking for one night, Amir Hamza’s illustrious army arrived in the vicinity of Mount Agate with splendor and set up camp. The king’s pavilion was raised and the camp’s bazaars opened up. Platoons began arriving and occupied the clear plains at strategic locations.

The foes’ wits took flight like birds when they heard the timbals and kettle-drums of Amir Hamza’s army. King Suleiman Amber-Hair gave orders for his soldiers to assemble and shut the city gates. He deployed canons of brass and steel and fortified all the crenelations, ramparts, bulwarks and battlements.

The Disappearance of Prince Badiuz Zaman on a Hunting Expedition, and of Amar Ayyar Going in Search of Him

While the preparations for war were being made, and Amir Hamza was camped opposite the City of Mount Agate, the pleasant air and green plains enticed Amir Hamza’s son,

*Badiuz Zaman the brave, the router of armies
The moon of the constellation of excellence,*

and filled him with a longing to go hunting. He sought Amir Hamza's permission but when he made no reply, Badiuz Zaman went to his mother, Gardiya Bano, and asked her to intercede for him. Gardiya Bano acquiesced and when Amir Hamza entered her chamber, she pleaded on the prince's behalf.

Amir Hamza reluctantly granted his permission, saying, "These plains are the abode of sorcerers. That was the reason why I had not granted my permission earlier, lest the prince should meet some calamity. At your interceding, I am granting him leave on condition that he return the next day and does not stay longer."

Badiuz Zaman accepted the condition. The whole night was spent making preparations for the hunt.

Before long, sun the Heavens' Hunter emerged from his eastern abode carrying the net of rays on his shoulders and started hunting the planetary fixtures on the sky's fields. The world-illuminating sun of the high noon of the auspicious planetary conjunction, the star that lights up the six dimensions of the skies of triumph, to wit, Prince Badiuz Zaman the Magnificent, headed for the plains for hunting.

As the first crack of daylight appeared, the draughts of morning breeze stirred, the tapers flickered, the buds flowered, the love-struck nightingales made their outcries, the peacocks danced in the forests, the birds fluttered away from their nests in search of food and water. Every living being occupied itself with thoughts of the Creator, every heart was filled with the Progenitor's name, and like a veritable preacher the ringdove sang a sermon from the pulpit of the cypress in the name of the True God.

The eminent prince began hunting in the plains with his equipage and retinue, occupying his gaze with the pleasant air of the land and the mountains. Suddenly a fawn appeared near the river bank, cavorting and gambolling like a frolicsome beloved well-versed in coquetry.

*Sporting a brocade sheet on his back
How beautiful and fairy-faced the fawn
His feistiness even a mistress could not attain
A veritable hunter in the meadow where hearts abound*

When Badiuz Zaman beheld that beautiful and comely fawn, he became infatuated and besotted at the very sight and gave orders to his commanders: "Take him alive! Beware, do not let him get away!"

The prince's companions immediately encircled the animal and made a cordon. The fawn pricked his ears and bolted, breaking out of the cordon by leaping off the prince's head. Badiuz Zaman chased him on his horse at a gallop and followed him for many miles until he left behind all his companions and found himself alone. Near to losing the fawn, and unable to take him alive, he drew an arrow from his quiver; notching the arrow and drawing to his ear, he let fly.

The arrow pierced the fawn and it fell. The prince jumped down from his horse and slaughtered him. The moment that fawn died a most dreadful voice was heard that made even the heart of Taurus in the heavens shudder and sent tremors in the seven heavens and the seven seas. It proclaimed,

“O SON OF HAMZA! YOU COMMITTED A TERRIBLE DEED BY KILLING SORCERER GHAZAAL THE FAWN. THIS IS THE LAND OF HOSHRUBA AND IT IS WELL NIGH IMPOSSIBLE TO ESCAPE ITS BOUNDS. ANYTHING THAT MAY HAPPEN NOW WOULD BE TOO LITTLE!”

The prince saw that the entire expanse had become dark with the billowing of sand and dust; a tempest of gales raged mightily. After a moment he lost consciousness and when he opened his eyes he found himself incarcerated in heavy chains. Resting his head on his knees, he became lost in reflection.

—

Be it known that the sons of Amar Ayyar are designated tricksters of the courts of Amir Hamza's sons. When a son was born to Hamza from a princess, a son was also born to Amar from the minister's daughter who attended to that princess. Thus Amar's son was deputed as the trickster of Amir Hamza's son.

A trickster named Umayya bin Amar, who was in the service of the prince of happy fortune, arrived on the scene where the fawn was killed and found the plains pitch dark and all the signs of doomsday's horrors manifested there. Umayya saw Badiuz Zaman's headless corpse on the ground, and the beauty that was the moon's envy lying before him all gored.

The trickster held up the corpse in his arms and broke into tears of grief. He rent the collar of his tunic in anguish and, throwing dust on his head, carried the prince's corpse on his horse to his camp. On the way he met the prince's entourage and when they saw that woeful sight, transports of sorrow assailed their hearts too. Weeping and wailing and throwing dust over their heads, all of them presented themselves before Amir Hamza. Witnessing that tragic misfortune, Amir Hamza and his companions gave themselves over to crying and making lamentations. The entire camp and the women's quarters rang alike with sounds of weeping and wail-

ing. Badiuz Zaman's mother, Gardiya Bano, was inconsolable and presented a living picture of grief. She would recite:

*“O solace of my heart and soul
You departed leaving me alone.*

*“You left without giving me news that you leave
Caring not a whit for my loneliness.”*

While the whole camp was occupied in mourning, Amir Hamza said to Amar Ayyar, “Harness my steed, Ashqar Demon-Born, and bring him to me so that I may depart in search of the murderer, kill him, and bring away his head.” Amar Ayyar replied, “O Prince and Pride of Heavens, I have heard that nobody saw the prince's killer. The expanse had suddenly become pitch black, and when the darkness parted the prince's headless body was found there.” Amir Hamza said, “By God there is some mystery in this matter, which the Heavens alone know. Send for the diviners!”

At Amir Hamza's order, the diviners Buzurg Ummid, Siyavush and Daryadil were sent for. They were the sons of Buzurjmehr, the minister of Emperor Naushervan of Persia. Their father had attached his sons to his camp to wait upon him with devotion. The tale of Buzurjmehr and Amir Hamza is recounted in *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*, and this much would suffice at present to acquaint the reader with their particulars. The diviners were masters in the arts of geomancy and astrology, and able disciples of their father. Amir Hamza seated them with great honor and asked them to find out what had passed with the prince.

The diviners drew the lots of perception on the board of introspection and drawing the horoscope, studied the manifestations of the year, the signs of the zodiac, and the lines of geomancy. After intense study and much contemplation and reflection they raised their heads and said, “O illustrious lord, Prince Badiuz Zaman is alive and safe. However, he is caught in the power of evil sorcerers and lies powerless and helpless in severe internment. The corpse that was brought before you was an effigy made of lentil flour. If you recite the Most Great Name on water and sprinkle it on the corpse, the power of our Creator will be manifested.”

As it happened, Prince Badiuz Zaman had strayed into Hoshruha, the tilism linked to Mount Agate. When the prince entered its frontiers, the Master of the Tilism and Emperor of Hoshruha, Afrasiyab, learned about it. He ordered one of the tilism's guardians, a sorceress named Sharara Flame-Spirit, to capture the prince. Sharara was ordered to leave the prince's effigy where he was captured so that it

would serve as an example to other transgressors and deter them from entering the tilism.

As Amir Hamza recited the Most Great Name over the water and sprinkled it on the corpse, it returned to its origins – a flour effigy. Amir Hamza bowed his head in gratitude before God and gave thanks to Him who sent the news that his son was alive. He bestowed robes of honor on the diviners and had the effigy thrown away. All the lamentations and weeping in the camp ceased and everyone celebrated the news. Amir Hamza sent for Amar Ayyar and, after conferring much gold and jewels upon him, deputed him to find the whereabouts of the illustrious prince.

Amar Ayyar decorated himself with his occult contraptions and the holy gifts he had been bestowed on Mount Ceylone.

The transcriber states that when the armies of Amir Hamza had arrived to conquer India, Amar had made a pilgrimage to the shrines of the prophets (Peace be upon them) and there Amar fell asleep. In the realm of dreams he had the beatific and marvellous audience of several prophets and they told him that certain devices of trickery had been kept for Amar in the chamber of their shrine. Among them was the zambil, which was a bag within which existed a world comparable to the world on Earth. Upon command, it produced anything that Amar wished at any time, and accommodated anything that Amar kept in it.

Also among them, the cape of invisibility had such properties that when Amar wore it he could see everyone but none could see him. The Net of Ilyas had the miracle that it could carry a thing even if it weighed millions of tons, and make it feel as light as a small stone. Wherever Amar raised Daniyal's Tent and took shelter underneath, none was able to capture him, and anyone who entered it was caught and hung upside down. And when he wore the *dev-jama*, it changed seven colors from green to red to yellow et cetera.

Amar took possession of these items upon receiving the tidings. All this has been mentioned in *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*. Whenever the reader may hear about these objects, he may associate them with that legend. These were the same objects that Amar readied before setting out with great dispatch for the wilderness to search for Prince Badiuz Zaman.

*Setting out in the expanse with such dispatch that birds of prey
Did not even catch the dust he stirred in his wake*

The Meeting of Princess Tasveer and Prince Badiuz Zaman and Their Falling in Love

At the end of his journey, when that Pinnacle of Trickery and the Star of the Skies of Dagger Fighting arrived at the place where Prince Badiuz Zaman had been captured by sorcery, he saw a meadow even more delightful than the garden of paradise.

Admiring the air, Amar carried onwards on his mission. Suddenly, a group of girls appeared on the horizon and Amar hid himself in a bush.

Princess Tasveer

Coming his way was a party of coquettish girls as beautiful and lovely as the moon, and as stately as the sun in the heavens.

*They were of ages between fifteen and sixteen years
Familiar to pangs of adolescence, and nights of desires*

Between them was a princess whose beauty was the moon's envy. She was the gazelle of the desert of beauty and a prancing peacock of the forest of splendor. She walked with her hand placed on the shoulder of one of her attendants,

*Like the rose in a cluster of nightingales, the supreme lord
Like the moon among stars, the lantern of heavens*

and was outfitted in a fine costume and jewelery enchased with gems. Absorbed in the sights of the wilderness, she stepped with a graceful and haughty air.

Amar was regarding the whole scene from his hiding place when one of the princess's attendants felt the call of nature. She sat down to make water at some distance from Amar while her companions continued along their path. Amar reckoned that if he joined the princess's party he might find some clue that would help him locate the prince. He came out of the bush and threw his snare rope at the girl answering the call of nature. When she raised the alarm, Amar stuffed her mouth with a trickster's ball and drugged her unconscious. He tied her to a tree and, putting a mirror before his face, began putting on colored powder and trickster's lotions, changing his face to the girl's likeness. He took off her clothes and dressed himself in them. Leaving her tied there, Amar Ayyar rushed forward to join the party of attendants.

Taking Amar Ayyar for their companion, the girls said, "O Shagufa! You took your time. What else were you doing there besides answering the call of na-

ture?” Amar realized that the girl whose disguise he had put on was called Shagufa. He answered, “Come now, I didn’t take all that long!”

Talking together, they all approached a garden. Amar saw that its gates were open like the yearning eyes of a lover, and the cold wind that wafted there was like the Messiah’s breath. The beauties entered that garden, whose splendor had no equal, and Amar beheld wondrous grounds that were the envy of the garden of paradise.

It was adorned with beautiful promenades and esplanades, paved with jewels instead of bricks. The trees were wrapped in gold cloth. The hedges of henna plants and grapevines decorated the silken grass bed. Like a drunken guest in a wine house, the breeze kept crashing into the ewers of trees. The goblets of flowers brimmed with the wine of freshness and beauty and exhaled a captivating redolence.

Sorceress Sharara Flame-Spirit

In the middle of the garden was a marble platform a hundred yards long and as wide on which a royal carpet was spread. A bejewelled, caparisoned regal throne was placed on it with a canopy made of strung pearls. A finely clad woman in her fifties was sitting on the throne, resting against the pillows with great pomp and majesty. The perfume box, betel box, dry-fruit box, and flowerpots were placed around her on the throne. She rose when the princess, whom Amar had accompanied, approached, and stepped forward with a smile to welcome her. The princess saluted her respectfully. Her attendants also curtsied to the older woman reverently and retreated respectfully in silence afterwards.

The older woman was none other than sorceress Sharara Flame-Spirit, who had put a spell on Prince Badiuz Zaman and imprisoned him. The visiting princess was her niece, Princess Tasveer, the daughter of Empress Heyrat of Hoshruha. Sharara blessed and kissed Tasveer and seated her on the throne. She ordered accomplished dancers to present themselves and display their talents. A spectacular recital was soon in progress and cups of wine were served.

In the middle of these revelries, Sharara asked Tasveer, “My child, what brought you to these parts? Why did you inconvenience yourself by travelling on foot in the wilderness?” Tasveer answered, “Venerable aunt, reverent to me as my mother! I have heard that you captured one of Hamza’s sons. I am most desirous of seeing a True Believer. Even though they are the creation of our Lord Laqa, they seem so powerful that even our Lord is completely helpless before them. They drive our Lord from land to land and pursue him relentlessly. I have also heard that these people laid hundreds of lands to ruin and destroyed and burned as many til-

isms. I wish to see them to behold the might, power and majesty invested in them by Lord Laqa when he created them.”

Sharara laughed and ordered the prisoner to be brought out so that his plight may be presented to the princess.

A party of sorceresses went away to carry out her orders. In the garden was an enchanted summerhouse where buildings stretched for miles on end. Badiuz Zaman was imprisoned in a chamber inside one building under the vigil of sorceresses. When they received Sharara's orders, the spell was taken off Badiuz Zaman. He was put in chains, fetters, handcuffs and leg-irons. Spiked iron balls were thrust in his armpits and his thighs were secured in steel clasps. Sorceresses led him out by a chain attached to his waist and presented him before Princess Tasveer.

The princess beheld the prince's comely face and his world-adorning beauty. She regarded a handsome and beautiful youth who was a world-illuminating sun of the sky of beauty and a lustrous pearl of the oyster of refinement.

The moment their eyes met, the bow of the prince's eyebrow released the arrow of love, which pierced through the princess's heart, making life a burden for her.

The princess laid her head on the throne and fell unconscious. After much to-do, Sharara restored her to her senses by sprinkling her face with rose-water, essence of musk, and restoratives.

Prince Badiuz Zaman beheld the ravishing beauty regain consciousness and regard him with a longing gaze. The Painter of Creation had surpassed Himself in creating her dazzling beauty and the prince's heart became all aflutter. He felt it nearly break free from the oppressive imprisonment of his body to imprison itself in her locks. That beauty, who was the envy of the House of Mani, was called Tasveer, but the sight of her unparalleled beauty was such that none could behold it without himself becoming transfixed with wonder like a mirror, and still like an image.

The inventive Transcriber of Nature had calligraphed with the pen of beauty the word "HEART-RAVISHING" on the tablet of her face; one more beautiful did not exist in the whole gallery of Creation. The prince became enamoured of her with a thousand souls, and inconsolable in her love.

*Ah desire! Ah desire! the heart cried
I depart! I depart! fortitude answered
The senses began to scatter and disperse
The heart held the standard of frenzy aloft
All sense of shame and dignity began to dissolve
And thus ensued a battle between the mind and heart*

But he got hold of himself and became quiet, realizing that he was already a prisoner in the tilism and if his love were discovered, everyone there would become his enemy and his life worthless.

When Sharara saw Tasveer's suffering, she said to her attendants, "Take away the prisoner! My niece's virgin blood is unfamiliar with oppressive humours! She fainted because she has never seen anyone in such misery and distress before."

The sorceresses led Badiuz Zaman away, locked him up in his chamber, and left him. The prince forgot all the misery of his imprisonment in his new-found love and the memory of the princess began tormenting his grief-stricken heart.

He constantly recited couplets and said to himself, *O Badiuz Zaman! It is impossible that she would ever find you worthy of her attentions; her beauty has intoxicated her with vanity. If you ever found release from this prison, you would surely die a most wretched death in the prison of her love.*

While the prince was undergoing these pangs, Tasveer's longing eyes, too, searched for her flower of excellence. Unable to find what she most ardently desired, she drew an icy sigh from the depths of her pining heart. However, she became quiet as well upon reflection on the disastrous consequences of her passion.

Sharara asked her, "How are you feeling my dear child?" She answered, "Dear aunt, I don't know how to describe to you the sinking feeling in my heart and the dread that seized it at the thought of the prisoner's hardships and harsh imprisonment." Sharara answered, "My child! You are a princess and must not succumb to such anxieties. Felons and estimable folks appear daily before the royalty. Some are hanged or beheaded, while others conferred purses of gold and robes of honor from the royal bounty. Hamza's son is an enemy of sorcerers. He has been imprisoned at the orders of Emperor Afrasiyab, and it's a near impossibility that he will ever be freed. Had it been someone else, I would have gladly released him for your sake and conferred gold and riches on him besides. Now you have my leave to return to your garden. I see that your condition is not improving. Perspiration is covering your forehead still, and idle visions and horrors continue to torment you. If you stay here longer you will remain engrossed in such thoughts. It would suit you better to return to your house, distract your thoughts by conversing with your confidants, and occupy yourself no more with thoughts of the prisoner! Once you go away your spirits will revive like rosebuds breaking into bloom."

Tasveer rose from there and thought, *It was well that my aunt sent me away. Had I stayed here longer, a word of pining or a sigh of longing might have escaped my lips and disclosed my love. Once I am back in my garden, I will cry to my heart's content and unburden it of its sorrow.*

As she bowed from her waist to pay her respects to her aunt before leaving, the beauty, who was the envy of the full moon, became a picture of the crescent. Sharara blessed her and bid her adieu.

Tasveer's attendants, who were promenading in the garden, presented themselves when told of the princess's departure. Amar Ayyar, who was also among them in Shagufa's disguise, thought, *God knows where the princess will go from here. Prince Badiuz Zaman is imprisoned in this place. I must kill this strumpet Sharara and secure the release of my prince!*

The false Shagufa presented herself before Sharara and said humbly, "Your slave girl has become greatly enamoured of this place and this garden. I wish to remain at your feet awhile and not depart today. Besides, I have attained a degree of excellence in music, and now that I have found a connoisseur in you, I desire that you witness my accomplishments. You might find me worthy of your beneficence." Sharara answered, "O Shagufa! Tasveer's house and my house are as one. There is no separation between our households. You may stay here for as long as you wish." Sharara turned toward Tasveer and said, "Tasveer, my child, leave Shagufa here with me!" Tasveer answered, "Very well, aunt!" She left shortly afterwards and the false Shagufa stayed behind.

Princess Tasveer went staggering and stumbling on her way, inconsolable with the pangs of love-induced grief. She kept saying to herself, *Ah, what a misfortune that I fell in love with the one who has sworn enmity to my life and my faith, as he is a slayer of sorcerers! His release from the prison is near impossible. Alas, alas, alas! He will lose his life for nothing!* She was occupied with these reflections when suddenly the real Shagufa arrived before her, all naked and in tears. Princess Tasveer wondered what had happened to her in the time that she had been left with Sharara, and who had stripped her of her clothes.

Shagufa threw herself at the princess's feet, and said, "My princess, I was accompanying you when I stopped along the way to answer the call of nature. A man appeared from the bushes all of a sudden and God knows what he did to me that I lost consciousness. He stripped me and left me tied to a tree. When I came to, I implored a passer-by to help me, and after freeing myself, I rushed before you. I consider myself fortunate that I again behold the face of Your Honor."

The princess marvelled at the story, and thought, *I should not breathe even a word of this to anyone. Perhaps one of Prince Badiuz Zaman's friends put on Shagufa's disguise and stayed behind to find some way for securing his release. If I talk about it, Sharara will hear of it and that poor soul will also be captured.*

In her love for the prince, Tasveer did not show any consideration even for her own aunt. She sent for her attendants, had a change of clothes brought for Shagufa, and said to everyone, "Look at this wanton girl! She did not want me to learn

what she had in mind, so she took leave to stay behind at my aunt's house. Then she stole away God knows where so that even her clothes were stripped away." Sh-agufa protested and said, "Pray believe me, I speak the truth!" The princess replied, "Quiet, you liar! I will never believe a word you say! I swear by Lord Sameri that if you speak again I will have you punished most severely!" After threatening Sh-agufa against opening her mouth about the incident or spreading the news of what had passed with her, the princess diverted herself with the sights of her garden. She put her hopes in the Omnipotent Causer of Causes to create a way for the prince's release.

When Tasveer stepped into her garden, she found it a veritable thorn in the absence of her nightingale-like beloved. She could find neither peace nor rest. Her heart was marked by the prince's love like the tulip; her gaze awaited the prince's sight like the narcissus; and, with longing in her heart, she waited for the noble prince, all delicate and fragile like the spikenard.

(To be continued)

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Notes

¹ We will publish the next installment of Musharraf Farooqi's translation in our next issue.

Selections from the Poetry of Kishwar Naheed

Translated by Mahwash Shoaib

Translator's Note

Kishwar Naheed (b. 1940) is one of the foremost Urdu poets in Pakistan. Known for her activism both on and off the page, she is a pioneer in many respects: one of the first women poets to be published extensively, she is also a practitioner of free verse and prose poetry, newer additions to the metered and rhymed traditions of Urdu poetry.

I have translated some poems from Naheed's 1998 collection *Mein Pehley Janam mei Raat thi / In My First Life I was Night* and *Sokhta Samani-e-Dil / Composition of a Scorched Heart*, published in 2002. What is astonishing about these poems is how frighteningly prescient Naheed has been about the present debacle Pakistan finds itself in and to which the headlines of the past few weeks also bear testimony. These are poems written against neo-imperialism, the imbalance between the social classes in Pakistan, the failure of the Pakistani state to provide justice, the draconian rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the US invasion of Afghanistan. What rings clear in all of Naheed's poetry is the call to equality and undeniable rights for everyone – especially women, as they become the subject of her poetry repeatedly. Her quote of a popular verse from the poet Mohsin Bhopali (1932-2007) at the end of "Ants Consume the Elephant" demonstrates Naheed's belief that it is impossible to stop someone from asking questions, and that possibility of hope is a much-needed poultice Naheed has supplied through her poetry and borne the responsibility for in her literary career spanning more than four decades.

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Mein Pehley Janam mei Raat thi / In My First Life I was Night by
Kishwar Naheed (1998)

The Poem that Doesn't Melt in Europe / Europe mei na Pighalney Wali Nazm

I was once sorrow, epitome of sorrow
before seeing
the crying sobbing women of Bosnia.

I was once woman
before seeing
mad from incessant crying, unclothed
limp, senseless, glassy-eyed women.

I was once hunger
before seeing
humanity in Rwanda eating its own excrement
in Somalia shredding the hide of camels.

I was once voice
before seeing
the community of nations closing its eyes
like bats
and even death trembling at this scene.
Darkness, helplessness and barbarity all have their own stench
This stench is not for those nations
waiting
for the end of the last man who asks for his rights. (23-24)

My Nation, Listen to My Entreaty / Aey Meri Qom! Meri Binti Sun!

My country came into being through a law,
the law of the British
British – whichever line they drew
and gave it the name of two countries,
we just accepted it.

Our nation accepts every thing and every person
This nation accepted tyrants
it accepted lackeys, accepted impostors
If it did not accept,
it did not accept maulvis
it did not accept vampires and wolves,
did not accept declarations and fatwas.

O my nation
Your ancestors also had not accepted them
Your courts also had not defended them
Your flag also had not worn their amulets.
O my nation,
beware of those people
saluting them
defending them
wearing their amulets.

They hate woman,
as if they hate their own mother and their own daughter
In every shape of woman they see lust
and decorate their dreams as such
May any disaster fall upon the world,
they will not speak
May all the officers of all the country
become corrupt, drunk, venal,
they will not speak
On each and every step throats are slit,
people are bought and sold,
they will not speak.
Yes, but if any woman emerges with a banner in hand –
instantly they will speak
instantly delete her from the sphere of Islam,
from every reward of life.

O my nation!
Seek shelter from these merchants of Islam
Else in the harems of tribal leaders and landlords
our futures will be nurtured

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These people will not issue fatwas against them
And when our future children
won't be able to tell the names of their father
then even flocks of swallows will not come to their help. (20-22)

A Solemn Conversation with the Taliban / Taliban se Qibla-ru Guftagu

Those who were frightened even of girls
Those even averse to knowledge,
they speak of the great Lord
He who commands of knowledge
Unrelated to His command,
they announce these declarations:

That no book be in any hand
Nor a pen between fingers
No place remain for writing a name
That women become nameless

Those who were even frightened of girls
announce in every city:
That the budding contours of a young girl
be veiled
That to the query of every heart
answer this –
There is no need
that these girls
soar like birds
There's also no need
that these girls
head to any schools, any offices
If there be some blazing beauty, some one pious
then only within the walls
is her place
This is the Decree
This Written.

Those who were frightened even of girls

they are here, somewhere nearby –
See them, know them
Expect anything from them
in the fallen city
Keep courage, believe this
that those who were frightened even of girls
what pygmies they are
Announce in every city:
Keep courage, believe this
That those who were frightened even by girls
they are such pygmies. (88-90)

Unexpected Balance / Gher-Mutawaqa Tarazoo

I saw
no wood and no material,
yet a bridge had been built on the boats of compromise
The crossers had crossed
and the fallers had fallen too

I saw
no hand and no staff,
yet in a few seconds the scales had become weightless
Only walls were left,
the turban had become worthless

I saw
no one to pull the trigger and no gun,
yet in bunkers and moats
instead of the pounding of war-drums and banners
a jingling was sounding
Out of toy guns too
golden shimmering pages were issuing

I saw
words even unclothed were not crestfallen
they didn't even ask for shrouds

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Only for a needle
to remove the connection of words and lips (31-32)

Provisional Kingship / Aboori Shahwar

If you had to speak,
you should have told some new story
Apart from convention, you should have expressed the world's conditions.
What is this? Those same pharaoh's deeds
you also acquired
You too with the affirmation of tyranny
ask from us the allusion of the spectacle of acceptance.
If nothing else, ask for the bond of tolerance.

We were distressed, sorrowful
but still were silent:
We thought the messiah's embodiment isn't complete yet.
Again from behind some roof the sun will rise
that it will not give a chance to the faceless trickster to hide
It will also be herald to we who were punished for desire.
You are an earthling
You tell a story but
the debts of madness are the same
the words of reproach the same
in dreamworld, the portent of interpretation also same
the story of coming hidden at nights also same
all false hopes same
all coquetries also same.
If you had to speak,
you should have told some new story. (62-63)

Dream Journey / Khwab mei Safar

The land changed, the taste of breezes changed
but the face didn't change:
this woman is my face.
This woman has played with me

in the garden burning from the sun
This woman, bathing in the shower of grief
smiling even when wearing all the wrinkles of age
and relating her sorrows to the wind
distributing joys among all,
seems like dew.

I know that her friend
is a window in her house
where she has saved
all the fragrances, all the encounters of her spent life.
All those wrinkles that age has written on her face
landing in that window, all are dissolved.
That girl emerges afresh
who has worn the necklace of the pearls of desire.

(74-75)

Accountability / Ehtasaab

Again with the bugle sounding
now the slaughterhouse is being adorned.
It is calling forward
taking name of every one.
The charge sheet is clean
but the ink is fresh
Here, write with pen on it:
You are guilty, this is proved.

*

In the city is this proclamation:
Those who are the sons of the land
if they turn crooked,
they will receive immunity
Pawn justice
and they will receive official loans.

*

Crucifixes are asking,
Where shall we plead

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Whom shall we call witness
We were draped with necks
whose blood was unwarranted
Why their lips were sealed
this also was obvious to us.

*

Spring is coming again
The slaughterhouse is being decorated
Footfalls are mounting
The tones of the
clean crime sheet are changing.
The color of the eyes
of the judges is also changing.
Here, take the pen and write: Now even
you are guilty, this is proved! (91-92)

Sokhta Samani-e-Dil/ Composition of a Scorched Heart by Kishwar
Naheed (2002)

Fulfillment of Borrowed Joys / Mangi hui Khushion ki Tabeer

After the setting of the sun
every color loses its existence
When I come to the kitchen
to take care of everyday things
then all the colors of my being sink
Hands wrapped
in gloves made of cottonwool and plastic
start moving like those of jokers
All the stages from childhood to old age are completed
but the movement of jokers' hands hasn't changed
Those who built the pyramids
or transposed the caves of Ajanta into the Buddha's statues,
were they all jokers like me?

I wish those artists could be saved too,
love could be saved too (43)

Kandahar Dirge / Noha-e-Kandahar

We are supposed to cry for those who die
I have seen tens of thousands
die with my own eyes
I have also seen them turn young
I have also seen that their
fragile shoulders have been prepared for firing bullets
by placing dreams of paradise and houris on them
They kept listening to everything and kept weaving dreams
and then started walking towards that desert
where those who bury in the wall of peace,
in exchange for their white skins and the price of the dollar
leaving them unburied,
on tv screens
were telling the stories of their victory
I did not cry for those who had died
I also did not side with the white beasts –
to which tribe do I belong!
Am I the vegetation of the rubbish heap
that cannot differentiate between begging and hunger?
The words I write are also like the particles of sand
that neither build a wall nor a door
All around me are the slogans of war
and the statue of peace has been demolished like that of Bamiyan
I am crying now for those left alive
who are standing holding the shadows of desolation:
these people know the name of the enemy
but turn mute looking at a dollar bill (59-60)

To Which Heaven Are We Rushing / Hum Kaun si Jannat ki Simt Rawan hein

A nation that has neither grass for eating
nor bread,

a street for walking
nor vehicle,
that has freedom to live
nor sanctuary from death
A nation where people no longer have homes,
there are no more people to talk to
Whose children receive bombs for breakfast
and ceaseless bombing for lullabies,
death defines the boundaries of that country
You might remember
This nation had a vast history
such brave young men
and rosy-cheeked women,
the wind too sidestepped
the turbans on the heads of the men
The rosy-cheeked faces of this nation were enshrouded in sand
fields made barren
girls imprisoned in veils
and guns placed in children's hands
I feel
that there is a lesson for us in this whole story:
we who became the friends of the bombers
we who became the enemies of Taliban,
to which heaven are we rushing
Tomorrow when no one will buy our crops
the markets for the cotton
spun by our women dry up
when our very own will thirst for our blood,
then whose friend
and whose enemy will we be
The bread glued to your mouth
and the bread that someone throws in front of you,
tomorrow what bread will you get
tomorrow which city remain
The moment when there is no difference between friend and enemy
when hope avoids seeing its face in the mirror
dangling in that state –
tomorrow what person will remain
tomorrow which city remain

(61-63)

Poets and Palestine / Shair aur Phalasteen

Faiz had pacified the children of Bethlehem
singing them lullabies
Samih al-Qasim, in the hope
of achieving the land of Palestine,
kept writing poems and laughing
Fadwa Tuqan, even in the state of suffocation
boldly confronting the sun
kept saying that I
'will not sell its love'
Muin Bseiso had seen
the shadows of army boots on the words of poetry
Tawfiq Ziad had not
accepted even the tenth part of the sweetness of hopes
Mahmoud Darwish could not be stopped from writing
Whose poem,
a torn paper, was in his hands
under his feet was no such land
which he could call his own in dying
I, Naheed, in which courtyard
should sing someone a lullaby
that my children, in losing their lives in suicide attacks,
are alive and laughing (75-76)

Chant-Song of the Twenty-first Century / Ikeeswin Sadi ka Zamzama

I question
a human like me
when will you give me this dignity
when will you not be offended
on my walking alongside
on my being a person
on my dreaming,
thinking, on laughing

I question
I talk with you

when there will be dialogue
views are exchanged
in golden dawns
will be the nectar of conversation,
in all the affairs of the house
will be harmony of equality

I answer myself
I talk with you
This century that is gone
was yours
This century that will come
is ours
You too are a part of us,
yet are unaware of this
that all grievances want
honor of eloquence
That all devotions want
affectionate reception
If you accept this
if you know this
then the moon too will bowing say
this century that will come
is ours
It is ours!

(83-84)

To the Elected Women Counselors / Khawatin Muntakhib Counselors ke Nam

Placing an empty bowl in my hand
they all say
ask for what you desire:
bread, meat
respect, rank
royal morsels of sovereignty
doors opening to gardens.
I had also thought
that, outside of dreams,
I will be happy

to make every daughter of my country
the candle lighting
the threshold of respect and purity
I will give my sons
the amulet of self-respect
so no government to other countries
goes begging for loans
if it does, then to no avail.
Placing the empty bowl of sovereignty in my hand
they all laugh and say:
who told you, bitten by words, to come to this town
here the boat of the disparity between saying and doing will run the same
the desert of time remain the same.
When will the destination of understanding arrive
When will the empty bowl fill with knowledge
When will the woman out of the cage
learning to fly say to you:
the distance fixed between you and me
for centuries,
I have cut the rope of this distance.
I am wearing
all the seasons of rain and time
Come out of the garden of loafing now
Come mend the flawed deeds
Accompany me
The sunlight is pure
and now the plaque bearing my name is in every alley. (93-95)

Ants Consume the Elephant / Choontian Hathi Kha jati hein

On whom should I write a poem now
That widow
who without justice
under the shadow of spears and guns
besides the grave
is seeing her beloved's face

On whom should I write a poem now
That girl
who cannot marry
of her own accord
and those who point fingers,
her own blood,
are petitioners of justice
That darling
for daring to express her own will
is wandering between dungeons
and sees ahead the person who had reared her
in the form of an assassin

On whom should I write a poem now
The city of Kosovo
where a mother
has found all her six beloved children
in the same grave
Or should I go see in Albania
in unknown faces
the same
crying, lamenting motherhood

Weak colors fade
but the color of a mother's sorrow stays fresh
who will remove it
who will forget it

On whom should I write a poem now
My seven year old girl
is sitting in the imperial scales of the masters:
Wear a chaddar
Laughing, talking, dancing, singing
all are lewd
Even their reflections
should not gain ground inside the thresholds,
else hell on this earth
a brother's honor will compose

On whom should I write a poem now
On myself
That would be a narrative
of finding the flag and the veil
It will be an elegy
of bedimming bright eyes
The sunlight is luminous in the fields –
walking, planting harvests in it
bringing water from miles,
my daughter
laughing, talking, dancing, singing
lighting the lamps placed in the arch of ruminaton
says to the whole world
I will speak, I will sing
'Try if you can, stop
the drops of the first rain!' (102-105)

Shattering the Stereotypes: An Interview with Fawzia Afzal-Khan

by Nilanshu Kumar Agarwal

Fawzia Afzal-Khan teaches at Montclair University and is a poet, a playwright, a singer and an actor. She draws on both her academic tenure in the US and her insider's experience of alternative street theatre groups in Pakistan to develop her critical insight for the secular theatre there. Her book, *A Critical Stage: The Role of Secular Alternative Theatre in Pakistan*, has been well received. "Fawzia Afzal-Khan," in Richard Schechner's words, "is that rare person who is as fine a thinker as she is an artist and an activist. ...her book is a triumph of scholarship—and an exciting, up-close account of what it's like to do radical street theatre in today's Pakistan" (*A Critical Stage*, backflap). Her argument in that book concerns women's and minorities' rights, class and gender issues, language politics, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, which are defined and contested in the evolving and often conflictive relationship between the Pakistani State and Pakistani society. Another of her books, *Shattering The Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out*, has been admired by several scholars including Bapsi Sidhwa, who calls it "a timely collection that rings with veracity" (backflap). She has also authored *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel* (Penn State University Press, 1993) and co-edited *The Preoccupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Duke University Press, 2000). Her forthcoming book is a memoir, entitled *Sahelian: Growing Up With Girlfriends, Pakistani-Style* (Syracuse University Press).

Apart from this work, she has been a W.E.B. Du Bois Fellow at Harvard, an ACLS Fellow, an American Institute of Pakistani Studies Fellow, Rotary Fellow, and a Writers Residency Fellow at Lavigny, Switzerland. She has also been a HEC Fellow (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) to Government College University Lahore. She is on the executive boards of AMA (American Muslim alliance), PANA (Pakistani-American National Alliance) and PADF (Pakistani American Democratic Forum). The reputed journals like TDR (The Drama Review) and SAR (South Asian Review) have honoured her by including her name in their Boards. She is also the winner of an award at Greenburgh Annual Poetry Competition, NY. Her literary creations can be found in journals like NWSA Journal, Counterpunch

and TDR. In a detailed conversation, Dr. Nilanshu Kumar Agarwal interviews this unorthodox intellectual on several issues related to theatre, feminism and literary theory.

NKA: The Postcolonial scholars give a lot of attention to the concepts of hybridity, multiplicity and composite culture. Salman Rushdie, in his celebrated book *Imaginary Homelands*, talks about these concepts as thus: “Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it.... Throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who have claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought havoc among mere mixed-up human beings. Like many millions of people, I am a bastard child of history. Perhaps we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another...” (394). Will you describe the secular alternative theatre in Pakistan in line with the aforesaid argument of Rushdie? Make a statement on secular alternative theatre in Pakistan with reference to Rushdie’s just-mentioned comments about hybridity, multiplicity and composite culture.

FAK: Well, I think the secular alternative theatre in Pakistan, as I have discussed and analyzed it in my recent book, *A Critical Stage*, is very much about a challenge to orthodoxies that I believe Rushdie is talking about here. Many of the productions and street plays I discuss by groups like Ajoka, Lok Rehas, Tehrik-i-Niswan and others, are performances which want to make their audiences uncomfortable in the Brechtian sense—that is, make folks question their pieties and received or conventional ways of seeing and treating the “other” within. This “otherization” includes the second-class treatment accorded to women and to religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan by a society where the state and the mullahs of late have tried to claim a rhetoric of “purity” for the country on the basis of Islam.

NKA: What is the reaction of the orthodox people to this type of new venture in Pakistan?

FAK: Obviously, many people do not care for this type of work, and try and make fun of or belittle the importance of these groups; including calling some of them Ajoka in particular because of its many performances touring India—spies for foreign governments!

NKA: How is this parallel theatre successful in molding the sensibility of the people in Pakistan?

FKA: Oh, I think this parallel theatre is definitely successful in raising the level of awareness in the audiences about difficult but important issues affecting different sectors of the Pakistani populace. For urban middle and upper middle class audi-

ences, many are made aware for the first time about the level of injustice and oppression that their less-fortunate rural and lower-class sisters and brothers suffer. E.g., in plays like Ajoka's *Dhee Rani*, *Barri* and *Kaala Meinda Bhes*, and Tehrik-i-Niswan's *Aurat*, and Lok Rehas' *Saar*—audiences are made aware of the plight of women, and specifically, women who are illiterate and/or poor and from the villages and have little recourse to accessing their rights as human beings—as *Kaal Meinda Bhes* points out—they are ranked even lower than the buffaloes for which they are often traded—especially when the buffalo is healthy and can provide a family with milk to sell and drink!

When the audiences are themselves from rural or low-income urban areas, they are often shocked into recognizing and then possibly questioning their own adherence to unjust systems of living. In the Theatre of the Oppressed techniques championed by the former Punjab Lok Rehas—now practiced by their offshoot, Interactive Resource Center (IRC)—different communities in far-flung areas of Pakistan are encouraged to form their own theatre groups in order to role-play their problems and issues and, in so doing, find possible solutions for them.

NKA: In this advanced age of Information Technology, do people still visit the theatre? Don't you think the ancient art of theatre is dying a slow death due to the onslaught of Internet and TV channels?

FAK: Surprisingly, people still like going to see live theatre in Pakistan, since it is a rare occasion to “go out” and many theatrical venues really try to keep their ticket prices affordable for people of varying classes. Many of the “parallel” theatre groups, of course, provide “free” theatre to different audiences in lower-income areas, because their work is underwritten by NGOs who want certain issues to be highlighted. This also leads to charges of these theatre groups being lackeys or mouthpieces of foreign powers/the west being lobbed against them!

NKA: Did you face any difficulty in finding a proper publisher for your book *Shattering the Stereotypes*, due to its unorthodox subject?

FAK: As a matter of fact, yes! The Feminist Press had initially expressed interest in seeing the manuscript. But when they read, I think, Nawal el Saadawi's rather strong-worded condemnation of the U.S. and of President Bush, they withdrew their interest. One of my original contributors also withdrew her essay for that reason.

NKA: What will you say about the author-publisher relationship? Sometimes, the mutual understanding between the two can be missing. Whom do you prefer more:

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the sub-continental publishers or their counterparts from the West? Please make an argument.

FAK: Yes, this is a difficult relationship. I find that the most problematic aspect—and this holds true for both US-based and subcontinental publishers—is the issue of promotion and marketing. Both sets of publishers—especially since one is dealing with academic publishers whose budgets are necessarily small—are quite useless in this regard. Another difficulty is the issue of readers’ reports. Academic publishers require two solid reviews recommending publication before they will commit to taking the manuscript—and the problem here is that the reviewers, being busy themselves in their own projects, are often very tardy in their responses. So, a book can just sit on the publishers’ desk for a very long time.

NKA: What makes the Muslim women speak out? What do you think is the source of their creative inspiration? Is it their age-old repression by conventional male society?

FAK: At this moment in history, I believe it is a combination of this male prejudice from within their societies certainly, against which Muslim women creatively militate—but also, western ignorance and prejudice against Islam in general and Muslim women in particular, which has gotten their creative juices flowing in protest!

NKA: Did the males receive the book favourably? What was their general opinion about the book? Did you find some positive reviews of the book by Muslim men too?

FAK: Actually, now that you mention it, I realized the only reviews—and most have been favorable—have been by women! Wow!

NKA: What are the major themes of your poems and plays?

FAK: I have a lot of poems about mothers and daughters—their often difficult relationship in which so many different emotional and psychological issues get highlighted. I also tend to write about the relationship of politics to the personal issues of a woman’s life—including this construct called “romantic love.” Some of my poems and plays—I have written two plays, and published a lot of poems—also deal with crises of spirituality and its fraught relationship to organized religion and a world of patriarchy and war.

NKA: What are the major influences on you as a writer?

FAK: Many feminist writers and Postcolonial theorists, both male and female, whose work I became exposed to and enamored of during my PhD program and later as a scholar and academic, have influenced me and my writing style, as well as

the work of several poets, all from different parts of the world; also, my background as a Pakistani woman of Muslim origin having spent my formative years growing up in Lahore and also in parts of Africa have left their mark on my psyche and hence on my writing. Ernest Hemingway, Kate Chopin, Milan Kundera, Edward Said, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sara Suleri, Bapsi Sidhwa, Evan Boland, Meena Alexander, Kishwar Naheed, Leila Ahmed, Nawal el Saadawi, Helene Cixous, Gayatri Spivak and many others have all been inspirational writers and thinkers for me.

NKA: Why did you choose English for your literary works over your native language?

FAK: Well, I grew up attending an English-medium school in Lahore, and of course, speaking English at home as was the norm in most middle-class educated families of Pakistan at that time. We were all very much products of a colonial heritage, even though we were growing up in a postcolonial state, and so English became our lingua franca. While I also spoke Urdu and a smattering of Punjabi at home, nevertheless, it was the English language that I felt most at ease with and whose literature I read most voraciously--Enid Blyton and Agatha Christie were my favorite childhood and adolescent writers! So, it is only natural that I would feel most at home writing in English--though I love to use phrases from Urdu and Punjabi and other languages I have picked up over the years like French and Spanish in some of my writing.

NKA: Being a member of the Asian diasporic community in USA, did you feel some sort of alienation/marginalization in your writing/academic career? Please explicate.

FAK: It is a widely-held belief that America is a multicultural melting pot, and while there is some truth to it, the fact is that as an immigrant one does feel a sense of both belonging and exclusion to the American culture as well as to one's native land. I am a naturally friendly and outgoing person, and very curious about and also at home with different peoples, classes, and cultures. So I have had a relatively easy time assimilating into a dominant American cultural mold. However, I do feel alienated from what passes as the "norm" of behavior and the rituals of belonging which every community clings to--and so I don't feel entirely at home anywhere--either in my adopted land of the USA, or the country of my birth, Pakistan. That is okay with me, as I feel that some degree of "outsiderness" is necessary to be able to observe and critique mores and ideas which most people accept too readily and unreflectively in their desire to "fit in." Of course, I have faced some hurdles in my career as an academic, which I think have to do more with my political opinions than with anything else. As a fervent defender of Palestinian rights, I have faced

discrimination from colleagues in positions of power at my work-place, where I have been denied certain awards and honors, and even promotions due to their prejudice against my openly-stated beliefs. However, there are enough institutional safeguards that eventually one gets one's due--and I am a fighter! As far as my writing and publication career, I haven't faced too many problems--though I know I can't get any serious critical essays on Zionism to be published in the New York Times! But thank God there are alternative outlets--like *Counterpunch*, which regularly publishes my political writings. And when the feminist press turned down my edited volume on Muslim women's writings post 9/11, because, I suspect, of Nawal el Saadawi's strongly anti-US imperialist and anti-Bush preface, there was luckily *Interlink Books*--which specializes in books on the Muslim and Arab world--that took on the book and published it to much critical acclaim.

So, yes, there are always people and institutions trying to exclude you, but you have to keep up the struggle. And I think that happens everywhere, especially for those of us who seek to speak truth to power.

NKA: You are a literary critic, playwright and singer trained in the North Indian classical tradition. What about writing a novel?

FAK: I would like to---but it would require a lot more time than I have at the moment with so many different responsibilities and a full-time teaching career. I have completed a memoir, however, called *Sahelian: Growing Up With Girlfriends Pakistani-Style*—which is under consideration with Syracuse University Press, and which will hopefully also be published by Women Unlimited Press of India. I am keeping my fingers crossed! A recent memoir story from it was published in a collection of Pakistani women writers' work, in an anthology called *And The World Changed*, edited by Muneeza Shamsie and published by Oxford University Press and recently by the Feminist Press.

NKA: What prompted you to go for the Indian classical tradition of Music?

FAK: Well, when I was a young girl growing up in Pakistan, I somehow fell in love with the difficulty and intricacy of our classical tradition in music, and my first ustad, Abdul Haq Qureshi of the Kirana Ghirana, encouraged me in this passion and proved to be a sterling teacher. I went on to compete in—and win—many all-Pakistan Classical Music competitions and now am so happy to have had this training, since I can easily perform with musicians from different traditions, especially jazz. I have a band here in NY called the Neither East Nor West Ensemble and I love performing with them! Now the REAL reason I went in for classical training was rebellion---my mother thought if I could learn to sing some pretty film songs or light ghazals, I would attract some good marriage proposals...so instead, I went

in for obscure, challenging classical music which few people could appreciate in Pakistan since they lacked the training and sophistication required to appreciate this type of music. I thought this way I would be safe from unwanted proposals!!! And I was right!!! Ha ha!!!

NKA: As an outsider (you are a professor of English at Montclair University), how do you find the condition of English studies in the sub-continent? What will you say about the curriculum of English studies in the universities of the sub-continent? Does it not require a complete overhaul? Should we not include more regional literature in English translation in place of the colonial texts of England? Will it give a national character to English studies in the sub-continent? Please share your views.
FAK: I agree with your views on the fairly pathetic condition of English Studies in our part of the world---I can only speak with some authority on the situation prevalent in Pakistan, where I have had both the privilege and the frustration of teaching at the MA and MPhil level in recent years at two premier institutes of higher education in Lahore: Government College University and Forman Christian College. I have also given lectures over the years at my alma mater, Kinnaird College of Women (also in Lahore), and taught women's studies courses at the International Women's Studies Institute of Lahore.

In each of these contexts, I discovered that faculty especially are very attached to a very old-fashioned and moribund way of teaching, and also that they are constrained, even in this latter day and age, to teach materials that do not reflect these new literatures in English and translation. However, there is some hope for change. I did start a Postcolonial Studies program for MPhil candidates at GCU, and also taught a course in PS for MA students at FCC last fall. I also argued for the inclusion of Pakistani English writers like Taufiq Rafat, Maki Qureshi, Kaleem Omar, Bapsi Sidhwa, Sara Suleri, and a whole slew of younger generation Pakistani writers writing in English like Kamila Shamsie, Nadeem Aslam, and others, to be included in the curriculum at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Some places, like the University of the Punjab, do include some poems and other works by these and other writers—albeit sporadically—in their curricula. Recently, I have read and evaluated a PhD thesis written in Pakistan on Pakistani English poet Alamgir Hashmi's work. So, this means people are beginning to pay attention to the need to turn attention to “native” work, in addition to the usual “canon.” One can only hope this trend will continue and intensify in the coming years.

NKA: How is the sub-continental literature received in the west?

FAK: Ever since the ascent of Rushdie in the West, subcontinental literature in English has received a big boost here. Now, the younger generation of South Asian

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novelists and poets gets much acclaim here—and I have colleagues who love the ghazal form and even attempt to write ghazals in English! Many teach Rushdie, Bapsi Sidhwa, Anita Desai, Monica Ali and others in their courses. There are also many professors who are developing and teaching courses in South Asian Literatures in universities across the USA.

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Painting God's Words: An Interview With Amar Raza, Founder of the Quran Art Foundation and Research Centre, Islamabad, Pakistan

By Masood Ashraf Raja

I have known Amar Raza since 1978 when we both joined Military College Jhelum in eighth grade. Military College Jhelum was originally King George Royal Military School, one of the institutions built by the British in 1922 to educate the sons of Indian military personnel. By the time we got to the college, it had transformed itself into a premier military "farm school" and almost all the cadets were accepted with an understanding that they all will, in return for a highly subsidized education, at least apply to the Pakistan Military Academy. The students came from diverse regions and classes of Pakistani society and though the Pakistan Army ran the college, the college also had a small cadre of civilian professors who provided the best possible academic and cultural education to this diverse body of students.

Amar had a natural talent for art: in eighth grade he could sketch a portrait in ten to fifteen minutes. His talents were further polished as an active member of the Fine Arts Club, which was housed in an old cavernous building and was run by our highly talented and eccentric art professor, Mr. Muhammad Latif. While most of us wasted our time in playing our silly pranks in the art classes, Amar explored and mastered pretty much all areas of art. By the time we graduated from college and joined the Military Academy Amar had branched out into all media of Art including oils, watercolors, mosaics, collages, and sculpture.

Eventually, we both joined the army, fought a war together, and while I served as an infantry officer, Amar became one of the best gunship helicopter pilots. This brief interview has nothing to do with gunships and wars; it is rather an attempt at presenting the views, successes, and trials of Amar the artist. In the last twenty years, Amar has painted the whole text of the Qur'an, established the Quran Art Foundation, held exhibitions in Makkah and London, and offered hundreds of community workshops for Pakistani children. A copy of his rendition of the Qur'an is now included in the collection of the Prophet's Mosque in Medinah. Considering that over the last fifteen hundred years the mosque has only collected twenty-one such renditions of the Qur'an, Amar's being the twenty-first, one could say that Amar's work is worth our time and attention.¹

MR: Can you briefly tell us about your early years, your place of birth and some information about your childhood?

AR: I was born in 1965 at Lahore, Till grade 8th I got my initial education from Junior Model and Central Model school respectively. In grade 8th I joined Military College Jhelum. I was the youngest of my brothers. In my family art was the least liked subject, but I used to make drawing for my friends who were in art and drawing classes during my school hours while sitting in my Arabic language class.

MR: At what age did you start to paint, and what kind of painting were you interested in then?

AR: I started painting regularly when I joined Military College Jhelum in 1978. I got this opportunity through the Fine Arts Club, which was one of the clubs a student could join to fulfill the requirement for extracurricular activities. In the club, guided by Mr. M. Latif, our Art teacher, I got a chance to further explore my passion for art. Pretty soon I found myself working in different media including pencil sketching, water based portraits, landscapes and abstract art. Eventually, I started working in oil and tried my hand at collages and sculpture as well.

MR: What prompted you to start painting the Qur'anic verses?

AR: Around age of about 25 I used to think that art was inside me with all its purities and I could draw and paint whatever I wished. But the big question for me was to figure out the real purpose of this talent that God had given me. I wanted to use this exceptional gift for some better and higher purpose. And then, it seems, Allah gave me the idea of translating Qur'an into the language of colors. That one inspiration, to render Qur'an in colors, took a journey of 18 years. After eighteen years of work, I feel I was able to use my God-given gift in visually translating the Qur'an and in establishing a link of colors to the meaning of the text. I further added in it the techniques to give shapes to construction of words to make translation more easy and comprehensive.

MR: How is your technique different from the classical tradition of Islamic calligraphy?

AR: In classical tradition of calligraphy, emphasis is on graphic designs for beautification, whereas in my work meanings and their related colors along with construction of words is focused. Another major difference is that in my paintings complete chapters are at one place in one painting whether there are 3 verses or 286 verses, which enables the reader to view a whole chapter in continuity rather than experiencing it in fragments.

MR: How long did it take you to paint the whole Qur'an?

AR: It took 18 years to completely transcribe the Qur'an.

MR: When did you start the Qur'an Art Foundation, and how and why did you come with this idea?

AR: In the beginning I used to give my paintings to people to conduct exhibitions. After a few years, however, the sheer quantity of work made it difficult to handle exhibitions in such a way. That is when I started thinking of giving my whole work to some institution for its safe custody and also for making it available to the public. Unfortunately, not many institutions showed any interest in the project, except the Art Department of University of Tennessee. I then discussed the project with a few of my friends and thus launched the, then, Art Quran Foundation in 1998 at Quetta. Then, during a display in Makkah, Saudi Arabia through Rabita al Islami after a discussion with the religious scholars, we decided that the name should be the other way round and so we changed the name to the Quran Art Foundation. In 2004 in order to add a research component to the work of the foundation, we readjusted its name to its current designation, the Quran Art Foundation and Research Centre.

MR: Were there any problems, personal or institutional, in starting, sustaining, and creating the Qur'an Art Foundation? Did you get any kind of support from the Pakistani government or other institutions in Pakistan in launching and maintaining the Qur'an Art Foundation?

AR: Yes, there were and are a series of problems both personal and institutional. I had to do everything at my own. Many people at individual and institutional level promised help, but except for a few exceptional cases, none of that help ever materialized. The State Minister of Religious Affairs in 1996 did nothing for us after promising government help for the foundation in front of the media.

MR: Then how, if you don't mind my asking, do you support the whole project?

AR: In last 10 years we were given US\$1,200 by the President of Azad Jammu Kashmir, US\$ 2,000 US\$ by Haji Bashir of Padana Garments, Sialkot, and a donation of US\$100.00 by my mother. It costs more than US\$ 1800/month just to keep the center running, which I have been paying from whatever was left to me by my father.

MR: At this rate, how long do you think you can keep the Foundation afloat?

AR: I am currently trying to sustain it with my share of my inheritance and the current rate with the given resources I can sustain it only for another four to five months.

MR: In what way can the expatriate Pakistanis assist you in your endeavors? Are there any Internet tools available on your website for them to donate to the Foundation?

AR: They can help to sustain and expand this research, because it is useful for the future generations. They can help us in creating innovative techniques of teaching the Qur'an. We have recently developed a pedagogical CD on Chapter 30 of the Qur'an, which provides an animated, artistic rendition of the chapter. This CD is available on **youtube.com** under **Quaranartresearch**. Making such work is extremely costly and the expatriate Pakistanis can help us in developing CDs for the other 29 chapters of the Qur'an.

They can also help this cause and research by contributing in printing our materials and by placing it in libraries, schools, and madrassas. They can donate through our website or through your journal. They can also help in sponsoring certain segments of our research by contributing printing costs like printing 100 copies of any of our works and giving it to schools in their own communities. If they belong to an organization or have personal funds, they can sponsor media workshops to present a more humane and compassionate view of Islam and the Islamic world.

MR: would you consider exhibiting your work in the United States, or loaning some of your work to any US museums or Universities?

AR: Surely, I would like to share this work with all anywhere in the world so that people can see the soft side of Islamic culture and civilization; this would be really important in the United States. In Europe during exhibitions and workshops there were comments like "it's amazing to know that Muslims have art in their culture!" Since my work is research oriented I would prefer if university students and museum patrons use it. We will be happy to work with any university and museum in making this kind of cooperation possible.

MR: In what way do you think your work and the foundation serve the greater purpose of cross cultural and cross-faith understanding in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world?

AR: Our work is manifold and we have experienced its utility in different areas. For example: We conducted **art workshops with drug addicted persons** in a program called "**spiritual therapy workshops**" in efforts to bring them back to a drug-free life and received a tremendous positive response. Quran Art in collaboration with Art Council England conducted workshops with more than 200 children on the subject of diversity with participants from several religions. The diversity ideas developed in these workshops were selected and displayed at the House of Commons, U.K. We also conducted Art Workshops with Disabled Children in England

to explain the importance of colors in interpersonal communication. In Pakistan we are also working on interfaith activities that display the important role of art in bringing people from different faiths together.

MR: Is there any message you would like to leave for our readers on behalf of the Qur'an Art Foundation?

AR: I would like to give only one message that we should derive a lesson about time management from the life of the Holy Prophet and try to implement it in our lives. If we use our time wisely, we can come out of our intellectual slumber and stand equal to other nations as proud Pakistanis.

Notes:

¹ We have included a supplementary file about Amar's work that you can access through the reading tools links provided on the right, but those interested in a detailed look at Amar's work can easily find it on the website for Quran Art Foundation and Research Centre <<http://www.quranartfoundation.org>>.