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Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies

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Reconciling Religion: Bulleh Shah, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the American Transcendentalist Tradition

By Mike Unher and Sara Bano

Introduction

Much has been written regarding the influence of Persian and other Islamic poets on the literature and thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It has been revealed in much of his work that a strong line ran from Sufi poets such as Rumi and Hafiz through Emerson's own corpus of essays, prose and poetry. In fact, it is now apparent that Emerson was the first so-called Western author to have incorporated—indeed, to have been immensely influenced by—those and other 'seers and sayers' of the East. His translations of Hafiz and others, as well as his juxtaposition of Persian verse with his own, are clear indications that Emerson drew his muses from a deep and distant wellspring in his exploration of the inextricable mutual bond and co-dependence between mankind and nature. His poems *Brahma* and *Saadi*, in particular, serve as strong examples of the role that the semiotics of 'out-lying' cultures, so distant in time and place from his own New England, played in his poetics and his view of life as a universalist.

He wrote in the introduction to his essay *Nature*,

The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?

Now, in hindsight of over a century and a half of reflecting on Emerson's work, it will be interesting to consider the poetry and beliefs of a Sufi poet who, though unaffiliated with Emerson's work *per se*, presents an indirect illumination of the universal tolerance and values of American Transcendentalism.

Sufism: Definitions and Beginnings

To undertake such an exploration, it is helpful to define terms, especially for the non-specialist. Sufism, or *Tasawwuf* as it is known in the Muslim world, is often characterized as Islamic mysticism (Lings 15).

The first people to call themselves *Sufi* were a group of disciples of the Prophet Mohammed, *Praise Be Unto Him* (henceforth abbreviated in this paper as *PBUH*), who would often sit at his feet to listen to the tenets of Islam and receive enlightenment in the faith.

Seyyedeh Dr. Nahid Angha writes an interesting definition of Sufism and of its early beginnings:

The history of the origin of Sufism records that during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed (*PBUH*), fifteen centuries ago, there was a group of pious individuals from different nations who, guided by the Laws of Islam, sought for the direct experience of the Divine. Companions of the Prophet, they were people of principles practicing certain disciplines and meditations for the sake of purification, the realization of Divine love, and the understanding of reality. They were the Lovers of God who sought union with Him through losing the limited self in His Divinity (*fana*), and remaining alive in that Reality (*bagha*).

These individuals met on the platform, or *suffe*, of the mosque where Prophet Mohammed (*PBUH*) used to pray in Medina, Arabia. They would meet there almost every day to discuss the ways to inner knowledge, the truths of revelation, and the meanings of the verses of the Koran. Thus the platform of that mosque in Medina became the first gathering place of one of the most influential groups in the history of mankind's spiritual civilization. They were called *ahle suffice*, the People of the Platform.

Among the most famous of these *suffe* (adherents of the Sufi path who followed the Prophet Mohammed (*PBUH*)) were: Salman Farsi, Ammar Yasser, Balla'al, and Abdullah Masoud; some historians have added Oveyse Gharani to this list as well. Avoiding proselytizing among the multitude, their gatherings were held in private, open only to true seekers of reality. Instead of preaching in public, these pious individuals were more searchers for truth than performers of rhetoric.

After the Prophet Mohammed (*PBUH*) passed away, each Sufi returned to his homeland to instruct students eager to follow the path toward inner knowledge. There they became the great missionaries of Islam. History shows that within a

century or two their style of self-understanding and discipline was introduced by their students to nations as diverse and widely separated as Persia, India, Indonesia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and other regions of North Africa. Their teachings were based on individual understanding and direct experience, not just on particular texts or rote learning. In this manner their fundamental teachings have been preserved in their style up to the present.

Non-Muslims often mistake Sufism for a sect of Islam. Sufism is more accurately described as an aspect or dimension of Islam. Sufi orders (*tariqas*) can be found in Sunni, Shia, and other Islamic groups. Ibn Khaldun, the 14th century Arab historian, described Sufism as

dedication to worship, total dedication to Allah most High, disregard for the finery and ornament of the world, abstinence from the pleasure, wealth, and prestige sought by most men, and retiring from others to worship alone. (Keller)

On the other hand, in something of a departure from more prevalent definitions, Paul Yachnes quotes Islam scholar Victor Danner, in Yachnes' own introduction to his translation of Ibn`Ata`illah's *Book of Wisdom* (1978): "When dealing with Sufism, it is best to leave to one side such terms as 'mystic' and 'mysticism,' if only because in the modern Western world such words nowadays often lead to confusion." According to Yachnes, Danner instead prefers to identify Sufism "operatively and institutionally," as he does in his book *The Islamic Tradition: An Introduction:*

Sufism is the spiritual Path (*tariqah*) of Islam and has been identified with it for well over a thousand years. . . . It has been called 'Islamic mysticism' by Western scholars because of its resemblance to Christian and other forms of mysticism elsewhere. Unlike Christian mysticism, however, Sufism is a continuous historical and even institutionalized phenomenon in the Muslim world that has had millions of adherents down to the present day. Indeed, if we look over the Muslim world, there is hardly a region that does not have Sufi orders still functioning there. (Danner 84)

A strong cultural element has evolved with the interpretation of Sufism; as mentioned earlier, Sufism has been prevalent throughout the Muslim world up to the present time. While the shades of meaning and understanding and apparent shape of Sufism might be different across cultures, the basic ideology is the same from East to West, from Sufi poets as diverse as Rumi and Bulleh Shah.

Paul Yachnes (20) mentions different perspectives of Sufism in light of different definitions in his paper "Sufism Name and Origin." R.A. Nicholson, in his brief introduction to Sufism, *The Mystics of Islam* (1914), remarks: "Sufism, the religious philosophy of Islam, is described in the oldest extant definition as 'the apprehension of divine realities'" (1). Despite referring to it as "Islamic mysticism," he still maintains the popular idea that Sufism was largely the product of diverse philosophical and spiritual influences, including Christian, Neo-Platonic, and others. Nicholson further states that Sufism is "a subject so vast and many-sided that several large volumes would be required to do it anything like justice" (1). Nicholson's definition focuses on the diversity, universality and acceptance of all religions and creeds, which is one of the most significant and unique aspects of Sufism.

As Hidayat Inayat-Khan writes in his article "What is Sufi?":

Sufism is neither a religion nor a cult or a sect, nor is it only from east or from west. Sufism, which means wisdom, has always been and shall always be an open door to Truth; the wise feel sympathy towards all beliefs, while at the same time avoiding speculation upon abstract concepts. Sufism believes in the Divine origin of every form of worship in which the unity of religious ideals is respected.

Meanwhile, in his book *Kim*, Rudyard Kipling was content to refer to a Sufi as "a free-thinker" (167).

Almost all scholars today accept the concepts of divine origin and tolerance in Sufism. But Hidayat Inayat-Khan has given the meaning of Sufism simply as *wisdom*, which, like Kipling's *free-thinker*, seems to be an incomplete term compared with the basic doctrine that follows. In his article "Sufi Path," the definition of Sufism (*Tasavof*) is given thus, as a much more rigorous characterization:

Tasavof is the journey of the soul in search of the Truth, as well as its arrival. This is the renunciation of everything but God. It is paying complete attention and having a heart-felt connection to Him. It is infinite resignation to the point that one sees nothing but God with the vision of the heart, to the point that all other beings are seen as mere shadows of the Divine, until the state is reached in which "There is no being but God," and "There is nothing but Him."

Bulleh Shah and Ashfaq Ahmed

The compositions of Bulleh Shah, considered by many to be the greatest mystic poet of the Punjab, have been regarded as the pinnacle of Sufi literature. His admirers (many of whom have referred to him affectionately as Baba Bulleh Shah) compare his writings and philosophy to the work of Rumi and Shams-i-Tabriz. At present, he is held in great esteem equally in Northern India and Pakistan. Conveying this sense of “timeless appreciation” of Bulleh Shah’s work, Pakistan’s *The Daily Mail News*, published in Islamabad, recently printed the following announcement regarding an upcoming *urs* (devotional fair dedicated to Sufi saints):

BABA BULLEH SHAH URS BEGINS TODAY

KASUR—The annual Urs of Baba Bulleh Shah, the Punjabi mystic poet, will begin on October 1, 2009 and will conclude on October 3, 2009 in Kasur. Bulleh Shah’s poetry reflected his rejection of orthodox hold of mullahs over Islam, the nexus between the clergy and the rulers and all the trappings of formal religion that created a gulf between man and his Creator. A common theme of his poetry is the pursuit of self-knowledge that is essential for the mystical union with the Beloved.

There are varying opinions regarding the dates of Bulleh Shah’s life, but most researchers believe that he lived from 1650 to 1758. He was born Abdullah Shah, in the Punjab region of present-day Pakistan, in the village of Uch Gilaniyan in Bahawalpur. He was of the Sayyiad caste, and was thus related to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). His family was constantly shifting from place to place during his childhood. Bulleh Shah’s father, Shah Mohammed Dervish, was well-versed in Arabic, Persian and the Koran. His family moved to the district of Malakwal, and before long the head of the village of Pandoke sought a preacher for the village mosque. On the recommendations of the people of Malakwal, he approached Bulleh Shah’s father and retained him not only to perform the duties of the preacher, but also to become the teacher for the village children.

For young Bulleh it was a simple case of a natural curiosity and receptiveness as well as environment. These factors provided him with his early education and awareness of the power of religion and the written word, as well as a deep respect for learning.

Later, he was sent to Qasur for higher education, which in those days was a well-known center of learning. There he encountered eminent, well-known teachers such as Hazarat Ghulam Murtaza and Maulana Mohiyuddin. Bulleh Shah be-

came a pupil of Hazarat Ghulam Murtaza, and with his innate intelligence and moral proclivity, he gained much from his contact with this teacher.

According to Puri and Shangari in their article “The Life of Bulleh Shah,” there is strong historical evidence to show that Bulleh had become an eminent scholar of Arabic and Persian:

From his own compositions we can find many references to Islamic thought and mystic literature. Later, when he attained mystic realization, his erudition and learning acquired a new significance. But Bulleh Shah had to pass through a hard struggle before he could attain the inner knowledge. This attainment was possible only through his contact with his *Murshid* or Master, Inayat Shah. The study of scriptures and other holy books had only aroused his interest and curiosity about spiritual realization. His longing for union with the Lord reached its consummation only after he met a perfect Master in the person of Shah Inayat Qadiri.

Thus, it was his contact with Shah Inayat Qadiri that enabled Bulleh to realize his deeply-felt wish to transcend earthly passion, including that which he felt for his master, and attain the divine love he sought of the Lord.

Because of his pure life and high spiritual attainments, he is equally popular among all communities. Scholars and dervishes have called him ‘The Sheikh of Both the Worlds,’ ‘The man of God,’ ‘The Knower of Spiritual Grace’ and by other equally edifying titles. (Puri and Shangari, *The Life of Bulleh Shah*)

Sufism had been established in the Muslim world centuries before Bulleh Shah, and this tradition is still a part of the modern day Muslim world. So while his ideas were not alien and his message did not stop there, Bulleh Shah’s rather unconventional and bold poetry was not something easily acceptable for the so-called norms of fundamental society. For example, during his time with his master Shah Inayat Qadiri, he used the feminine metaphor to voice his thoughts, and he dressed like a woman and whirled like a common dancing girl of the street though he was from a highly esteemed and respected background (Puri and Shangari, *The Life of Bulleh Shah*).

It can be said that Bulleh turned rather eccentric in his behavior (and some around him even called him crazy) as he tried to define the love he felt for both his master and his deity. The following lines are taken from Bulleh’s homage to the love and passion he felt toward both his master and God:

*Your love has made me dance all over;
Falling in love with you was supping a cup of poison.
Come, my healer; it's my final hour.
Your love has made me dance all over.*

And

*Leaving my parents, I am tied to you.
Oh, Shah Inayat, my beloved guru.*

(Granger)

Bulleh's message through much of his poetry matches his broad perspective of universality that is much deeper than the mere appraisal of natural beauty—it has deep roots that reach down to the human soul and human heart. This concept is larger than life: divinity to universality and then to spirituality; all are interconnected and cannot be separated. This interrelation is characterized by the phrase “Ana ul Haq” (“I am divine”). Uttering such a phrase was considered at the time such a blasphemous expression that when it was uttered by the seer Mansoor Halaj (c. 858–922), he was forced to drink poison for his spiritual crime.

Bulleh Shah was a unique voice at that time in the Muslim world (and certainly in the present place and time as well), as he asked the people to destroy the mosque and the temple since it is in the human heart that God dwells. The concept of “self” is his focal point as he addresses mankind, asking in one of his more famous poems (known as a *kafi*), *Come to Our Abode*:

*Time and time again you go to temples and mosques,
but have you ever entered your own heart?*

This concept of forsaking the established constructs of prayer, and in particular the physical trappings of worship, such as mosque, church, and religious books, later drew universal attention, and brought new awareness to people like Malcolm X and others who felt disenfranchised by the majority religion and culture by which they were ruled. Such an awareness or enlightenment often can be found to turn many from criminal outcasts to leaders and visionaries. To regard all as equals, to achieve a humanistic equality, is paramount to the path of the human being on earth, which was and remains the heart of Sufism:

*Remove duality and do away with all disputes,
The Hindus and Muslims are not other than He.*

Deem everyone virtuous, there are no thieves.

For within everybody He himself resides.

How the trickster has put on his mask!

(Puri and Shangari, *Bulleh Shah: The Love-Intoxicated Iconoclast*)

Many years before, the Sufi seers of Persia, such as Hafez, Rumi, and Saadi, whom Emerson so admired many years later, conveyed the same message, and Bulleh Shah carried forth with the same vigor centuries after. Even today, Pakistani literature—not only in the national language of Urdu but in all regional languages—has a very strong Sufi tradition, as is found in the work of contemporary Sufi writers of Urdu, such as Qudrat-Ullah-Shahab, Mumtaz Mufti, Wasif Ali Wasif, Bano Qudseia, and, of course, Ashfaq Ahmed.

Ashfaq Ahmed (1925-2004) was a more contemporary voice of Sufism in our time. He was a well-known and highly respected playwright, broadcaster, university educator (in Pakistan and abroad), and intellectual author of more than 25 books, and was deeply inspired by Sufism in the latter part of his life. He had begun a TV talk show called *Baitthak*, meaning a place where people from all walks of life gather together and talk about their experiences and exchange wisdom. Later it was named *Zaviya* (perspective, dimension), where he professed his Sufi ideas to the Pakistani nation every week for more than a year. This talk show later came into book form also under the title of *Zaviya*, appearing in several volumes. He was not a born Sufi, and it came to him as a gradual transformation due to his lifelong experiences and his close contact with the authors Qudrat Ullah Shahab and Mumtaz Mufti, both prominent Sufi-inspired writers in the Urdu language. Perhaps the greatest influence was later in his life, when he would spend time sitting with Sufis, often in their impoverished homes, in an effort to unravel the mysteries of Sufism. At times Ashfaq would participate with the families in such mundane household chores as shelling beans and sewing cloth, and through these simple acts done within the context of simple lives, he was able to better understand the concept of balancing one's struggle for wealth and knowledge with an existence of devoted simplification and austerity in the so-called modern life. Out of these experiences came the question he was to ask for the remainder of his life: "All this struggle in life is for what?"

It was a question he could not answer at international universities, but rather found at the *dyera* (an open place to sit and talk) of Sufism. He was not immersed in the trance of divine love like Bulleh Shah, whose passion tore his soul apart and who reached such ecstatic heights that people believed he was insane. Rather, Ashfaq was a man of the world, a normal man with day-to-day worries and human shortcomings, looking for the meaning of life like many others.

While Ashfaq Ahmed was a prose writer and intellectual with the subtle sense and worldlier mood of the 21st century, and Bulleh Shah was a more passionate, fiery poet of the 17th century, both nevertheless focused their work on humankind. Their quest and longings were explorations of “self” in order to unfold the secrets of spirituality and divinity while living with and accepting universal diversities. Theirs has been a tradition that has survived and flourished as it passed from generation to generation and has undergone metamorphoses as it passed from culture to culture.

It is a major tenet of Sufism that the adherents are all-accepting and all-tolerant of every faith and race in that every human being is to be treated with equal love and respect—Hindu, Jew, Christian—in a universalist view toward one humankind, one God. This universalist quality can be found echoed later in R.W. Emerson’s own “conversion” from the strictures of his earlier Calvinist faith, through Unitarianism, and finally in his arriving at a devotion that transcended the limits of the parochialism of his present-day Christianity to embrace all people of all faiths, of all humankind, removing dualities.

Reconciliation: Adopting, Adapting, Empowering

The Reverend Jone Johnson Lewis, in her piece *What is Transcendentalism?*, writes of the concept this way:

One way to look at the Transcendentalists is to see them as a generation of well-educated people who lived in the decades before the American Civil War and the national division that it both reflected and helped to create.

It must be kept in mind that this period was a time of molding a national identity out of European roots. The academia and scholarship, the sensibilities and cultural trappings of the Old World were quickly becoming encumbrances, especially for the so-called academic elite of the northeastern U.S. Lewis goes on to write, “These people, mostly New Englanders...were attempting to create a uniquely American body of literature. It was already decades since the Americans had won independence from England. Now, these people believed, it was time for literary independence.” With the questions being asked then in European countries of old assumptions of religion and beliefs, we can see them “as a generation of people struggling to define spirituality and religion in a way that took into account the new understandings their age made available,” especially in light of the rise of evangelical Christianity and Unitarianism. Emerson, in particular, was drawn to religious thought and the scriptures of non-Western cultures—Hinduism, Islam and

Buddhism, for example—using such sources to examine his own ideas of God and truth. Emerson found much in them to direct his understanding of truth as something more widespread, close to a universal truth. In Emerson's famous oration delivered to the Phi Beta Kappa Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the end of the summer of 1837 (and published as "The American Scholar"), he ends his speech with a manifesto of Transcendentalism:

We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds...A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

While its tangible essence is that of a movement grounded in literature, one can say that its truer landscape is comprised of a way of seeing mankind as an inextricable part of the natural world. The ideals of transcendentalism have been manifested in the writings of its adherents and proponents, and continue to this day to be seen in what is termed "nature writing" and the environmental movement.

Yet our ability to express our profound link with nature is limited by the language we require in order to articulate this connection in any spiritual sense; as Emerson sought to express such a bond with nature, he relied on its symbolism to make the human-nature connection. Let us then look briefly at how Emerson's own sense of semiotics were reflected in his view of nature:

this origin of all words that convey a spiritual import,—so conspicuous a fact in the history of language,—is our least debt to nature. It is not words only that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections. Light and darkness are our familiar expression for knowledge and ignorance; and heat for love. Visible distance behind and before us, is respectively our image of memory and hope. (*Nature* 9)

In fact, we can see in the above a remarkable illustration of Emerson's progression of thought from natural fact through a recognition of the mind's own incompleteness—the inability to characterize a symbolic essence through language. With his essential axiom, stated in *Nature*, that "every natural fact is a symbol of some spiri-

tual fact,” let us consider the tripartite of this dynamic structure of his thought: 1) the inchoate essence of the natural fact—the stimulus, exists; 2) the mind, seeing this fact as a symbolic manifestation, gives it a meaning; 3) the mind recognizes the symbolism as something spiritual (transcendent of the object’s merely physical and unobserved presence in nature), and as such, the symbolism falls short of its tangibility. As the mind seeks out a sense of the spiritual in the symbol, with language it tries to seize and then convey its essence. But of course it cannot—we cannot—as language itself falls short of such an endeavor. Perhaps then it is the inadequacy of our language rather than any shortcomings in the mind’s perception and apparatus of thought. This is something that Emerson was acutely aware of, and a problem that absorbed much of his writing, especially in his work *Nature*.

Returning to Bulleh Shah’s poem *Come to Our Abode*, the reader may notice several references to the author’s regard for the conventional religion of his day. On the one hand, at the time Bulleh penned these works, Islam had become a fundamental part of everyday life in the Punjab. The influence of religious doctrine was an important element of the political and social structure of life in the Punjab region of Pakistan. Indeed, to speak out against the so-called system was tantamount to blasphemy, or at the very least, it was seen as a rejection of one’s own society. Yet it was Bulleh’s perspective as a Sufi that guided him away from the formalist religio-political establishment and toward a more open-minded, humanistic, yet deeply spiritual view of God in one’s own life. Thus, his point of view was very personal rather than societal.

As can be seen in *Come to Our Abode*, Bulleh makes reference time and again to the rejection of the trappings of religion—the sacred texts, the mosque, the religious hierarchy that governed the lives of Muslims—and calls on all people to instead embrace what God can mean to their own lives as they see Him for themselves.

Come to Our Abode
(*Sade Veray Aaya Karoo*)

*If God could be found by the clean and well washed
then frogs and fish could find God
If God could be found by roaming in the forests
then cows and fowls and animals could find God
Oh dear Bulleh, God is only found by those who are of good heart.
While reading thousands of books,
you haven’t even read your self,
Time and time again you go to temples and mosques,*

*but have you ever entered your own heart?
Oh Mankind, you fight with Satan in vain
but you have never fought with your own demons and desires
Says Saint Bulleh Shah, you try to reach the sky
but you could not capture the One who dwells in your own heart.
Come to our abode,
oh Beloved, in the morning and in the evening
Come to our abode,
Friend, in the morning and in the evening
Come to our abode,
Guide, in the morning and in the evening.
By God,
his God would not be angry with him
the one who has the skill to reconcile with his beloved
He does not need to go to Makkah, who can experience pilgrimage just at
the sight of his beloved
Seek in the forest, seek on the island
Destroy the mosque, Destroy the temple
Destroy anything that you can destroy
But never break the human heart
As God dwells in hearts, therein
While seeking in forests and among islands,
Seek in all the world
Do not torment me, Beloved
Oh Beloved come to our abode in the morning and in the evening.*
(Translated from the Punjabi by S. Bano)

Bulleh Shah never intended that his poems would be published, nor did anyone ever record the story of his life until many years after his death. His poetry comes to us through the generations mostly via the *qavvals* or singers of his poetry. Because of his unorthodox beliefs of the day, Bulleh's own sister had to pay the price for her brother's religious non-conformity and eccentricity—she was treated as an outcast of society and remained unmarried. At Bulleh's death, the *mullahs* denied him burial in his community's graveyard. Yet today, many regard his tomb as a holy place, where people come to revere him as a Sufi saint.

We can observe Bulleh's rejection of the established, and for him suffocating, religious didacticism of his day and see his desire to embrace the individual heart as tantamount to the veritable house of God. All else is equal and worthy within the walls of the abode, the dwelling place—the heart. We may then look

at these verses selected from Emerson's poem *Brahma*, wherein we may glimpse imagery and sentiment that bear resemblance to Bulleh's own:

*Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.*

*They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.*

*The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.*

Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish-born author and essayist of the 19th century, put great stock in the importance of *the leader* as an essential element of any structure of civilization and system of belief. He wrote in his essay "Heroes and Hero Worship," published in 1840, that "No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men," citing as examples Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson, and Mohammed (*PBUH*).

While Carlyle was raised as a strict Calvinist, his subsequent religious ideals were nevertheless modified by the influence of his studies in German Romanticism and by the scientific and social changes then taking place. Perhaps he saw the dogma of religion as an unsatisfactory guide for the common man in a changing society.

F.O. Matthiessen writes in his *American Renaissance*, "Carlyle had declared and Emerson agreed with him: 'Literature is but a branch of Religion and always participates in its characteristic: however, in our time, it is the only branch that still shows any greenness; and, as some think, must one day become the main stem'" (25). Matthiessen mentions that they were both following Herder's *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1833), abolishing the distinction between the sacred and the secular (25)—in Emerson's words, "Always the seer is a sayor" (Emerson, *Selected Essays*). In other words, the prophet is the poet. At the time, and in the place—New England—where religion, and most particularly Christianity, was a fundamental, pervasive and considerable power in society, it is poignant that this, too, was the

time and place in which Emerson went to look for his own God, to seek a belief that would meet his own changed needs. It consumed much of his time and literary efforts.

Bulleh's master Inayat Shah is said to have told him:

What problem is there in finding God? It only needs to be uprooted from here and planted there (Puri and Shangari, *The Life of Bulleh Shah*).

The metaphors of transcendence and reference to nature are not lost here. Nor is the path from Bulleh's problem to his solution very distant from that followed by Emerson, Thoreau, and other Transcendentalists of the American 19th century. The dogma of religion that suffused both Bulleh's time and Emerson's—be it Islam, Calvinism, or Unitarianism—was to be cast off by those so encumbered; the setting of nature then provides the domain for belief, Bulleh in his "mango grove and orchard of dates" (Puri and Shangari, *The Life of Bulleh Shah*, 6); Emerson in his New England woods; Thoreau, of course, in his Walden Pond and his bean garden. Emerson writes in his essay *Nature*, "To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society" (3). These words show a clear break with the past idea of the cloistered academic or even religious fervent, isolated in his study or cell. Emerson urged those who would seek spirituality and learning to step outside, thereby stepping into the realm of nature. Walt Whitman exhorted the classroom-bound to 'rise up and glide out' in his poem "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," which is found in his collection *Leaves of Grass*. The poet is sitting in a lecture hall surrounded by sundry charts, tables, and numbers, as the lecturer seeks to convey the essence of the stars. After which Whitman writes,

*How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick;
Till rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.*

Indeed, it is precisely what Henry David Thoreau had done when he quit village life and society in Concord to spend his 14 months in a cabin alone by Walden Pond, thinking, writing, studying the birds, flowers and trees, and of course, growing his beans.

In his essay on Persian Poetry, which appeared at the end of E. Fitzgerald's translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám and Salámán and Absál*, Emerson mentions "the seven masters of the Persian Parnassus—Firdousi, Enweri, Nisami, Dschelaleddin, Saadi, Hafiz, and Dschami" (*Selected Essays* 105). He refers to or

quotes from works of these revered names in this essay, as well as in his own poetry published elsewhere. One wonders if the fatalism of Omar Khayyám's *rubaiyat* might have appealed to Emerson's own understanding of Calvinism, in the sense of his own retained Puritan ethic.

According to Richardson in his "Emerson—The Mind on Fire," his first encounter with non-Western (i.e. non-Christian) religious ideas was a book entitled *Akhlak-I-Jalaly* (translated as *Philosophy of the Muhammedan People*), published in 1839. It was Emerson's first encounter with Sufism, which its translator W.F. Thompson called the "practical pantheism of Asia." Thompson stated further that the book should actually be translated as *Transcendental Ethics*, "holding all visible and conceivable objects to be portions of the divine nature" (406).

Emerson also owned the publication *The Desatir: or Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets*. These and other writings enabled Emerson to consolidate his understanding of the various "parts" of Sufi poetry and thought into a holistic structure (Richardson 407).

It was an all-encompassing "system" that gave Emerson the wide view of mankind he was seeking. Iranian scholar Farhang Jahanpour recently wrote of Emerson's intellectual journey in his essay *Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Sufis: From Puritanism to Transcendentalism*: "The study of his religious thought charts the journey from a narrow and dogmatic religious outlook towards a mystical, universal outlook" (2).

As was his point, Dr. Jahanpour might very well have written the above with Bulleh and other Sufi poets in mind, as well as Emerson.

And of course, Henry David Thoreau, often seen as the godfather of present-day nature writing as well as of the environmental movement, traveled a similar line, from doubts of the religious sentiment of the day to consideration of humanity's place in nature and, thus, with God. Thoreau saw nature as God's dwelling place and humanity as an equal part of the grand universal abode: "This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself" (*Walden*, "Solitude" 60).

Thoreau's high regard for the spirit of nature is seen in his deep understanding of all its contiguous parts. Nathaniel Hawthorne was particularly taken with Thoreau's insight. The following is an excerpt from Hawthorne's journal:

September 1, 1842. Mr. Thoreau dined with us yesterday... He is a keen and delicate observer of nature--a genuine observer--which, I suspect, is almost as rare a character as even an original poet; and Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which

few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures, and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden or wildwood, are his familiar friends.

The following is taken from Thoreau's seminal work *Walden*, which reflects his time in his cabin at Walden Pond, when he devoted himself to living "deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach" (42). Here, he describes what it means to tend his beans, which one senses is for him a near-religious devotion to nature herself:

We might try our lives by a thousand simple tests; as, for instance, that the same sun which ripens my beans illumines at once a system of earths like ours. If I had remembered this it would have prevented some mistakes. This was not the light in which I hoed them. The stars are the apexes of what wonderful triangles! What distant and different beings in the various mansions of the universe are contemplating the same one at the same moment! Nature and human life are as various as our several constitutions. (6)

Thoreau mentions beans 35 times in *Walden*, as if the subject itself were a spiritual link with nature and an understanding of how humankind can coexist as her equal partner.

In fact, reference to this same so-consecrated legume is made with regard to Bulleh's life. While society in general has not looked upon farming as an intellectual pursuit, tilling and cultivating the land for one's sustenance is held in high regard by both Thoreau and Bulleh's master, Inayat Shah. Puri and Shangari write of the nonconformity of a religious disciple and master in engaging in such a vocation and the severe effect it has on society: "For a distinguished scholar [Bulleh Shah], who belonged to the line of Prophet Mohammed (*PBUH*), to accept an ordinary vegetable grower as his master was a very extraordinary event in the social conditions of Bulleh Shah's times. It was like an explosion which shook the prevailing social structure" (*The Life of Bulleh Shah* 6).

The Settings of Nature: Servants and Domains

There is little evidence that Bulleh or other Sufis had any special recognition of nature as we see it *per se*, as something apart from the trappings of civilization, but of course it was certainly a spiritual entity for the Transcendentalists. That tradition of regarding nature in a sacred sense is carried today by such contemporary

authors as Gary Snyder (*Turtle Island*, among other works), Mary Oliver (*Thirst: Poems*), Terry Tempest Williams (*Finding Beauty in a Broken World, Illuminated Desert* and *The Open Space of Democracy*), Rebecca Solnit (*One Nation Under Elvis: An Environmentalism For Us All*), Ed Abbey (*Desert Solitaire*), Jack Kerouac (*On the Road* and *Dharma Bums*), and Linda Hogan (*Dwelling: A Spiritual History of the Living World*). It has become an integral part of academia; for example, Rebecca Chamberlain teaches a course at Evergreen State College (Washington) called *TRANSCENDENTAL VISIONS: Re-Imagining The American Dream*. She offers two quotes on the course website that are pertinent here:

In Wilderness is the preservation of the world. —Henry David Thoreau, “Walking”

We are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

The spirit of transcendentalism might even be called a kind of cultural personality trait in the American collective conscience, having manifested itself throughout the 20th century in politics and social revolution (non-violent civil disobedience, transformational activism concerning human rights and minority enfranchisement, the hippie movement, environmentalism and anti-pollution lobbying, and the consumer rights movement spearheaded by Ralph Nader).

In Chapter 2 of Emerson’s essay *Nature*, called “Commodity,” he writes:

Under the general name of Commodity, I rank all those advantages which our senses owe to nature. This, of course, is a benefit which is temporary and mediate, not ultimate, like its service to the soul.

The taking from nature to extract, to form, to mold, to create, to manufacture, he says, is “the only use of nature which all men apprehend.”

Of course, Emerson and his peers did not see “giving back to nature” as we do today—recycling and conserving in such a rhythm as to endeavor to at best match our material appropriations, in some kind of physical balance with what we take from nature’s abundance. Rather, they saw their “returns” to nature as recognition of the deeply spiritual sense of their natural environment, to see nature’s attributes as gifts to humankind. And so he presents us with his concept that what we extract will (must) be returned to nature in the form of veneration, to be revived as our own spirit and enterprise needs us to do, in holding nature’s gifts in reverence. For to return what we have wrought from the earth back unto it, for Emerson and

his descendents of the more ecological environmentalists, is an act of the highest moral virtue of humankind:

What angels invented these splendid ornaments, these rich conveniences, this ocean of air above, this ocean of water beneath, this firmament of earth between? this zodiac of lights, this tent of dropping clouds, this striped coat of climates, this fourfold year? Beasts, fire, water, stones, and corn serve him. The field is at once his floor, his work-yard, his play-ground, his garden, and his bed.

Recently, work of photographers John Willis and Tom Young was included in a small chapbook authored by the eminent geographer and author Yi-Fu Tuan titled “Place, Art, and Self.” The photographers presented images they had made of a paper recycling plant located along “the seemingly pristine hills of western Massachusetts” (81) in an artistic statement juxtaposing the images of discarded newsprint and advertisements with the paper’s own first source of the absent trees.

In ways both disturbing and intriguing, the rural landscape of forested hills has been transformed into a landscape of bales of discarded paper. This paper carries images and text from popular culture, and is formed into a new topography with lingering evidence of its past existence. (81)

This is what we see in the photographs, all in black and white: Stacks of huge square bales of paper bundled with wire arranged like stone walls enclosing an alley, piles of shredded paper nestling old printed images of a group of people, a gazing eye, anatomical drawings from an early 20th century medical textbook, a torn fragment of a Raphael reprint, some Hebrew text beside a photograph of nurses tending to patients in a hospital, a man with hands clasped in prayer, two mirror images of a toddler at the beach, arranged on a sheaf of folded, soft white wrapping paper.

All are awaiting their conversion into blank pages.

On reading the photographers’ views and impressions and considering the end results, one is acutely aware of the sense of time passage in parallel with transformations made from source to discard, from utility to abandonment. It is a disquieting series of photographs and ideas, yet the underlying functionality of their setting—a recycling plant—also conveys a sense of hope that the discarded paper will be revived into something once again, that it will carry a different meaning, that those trees still exist. Bulleh Shah writes of the inexorable link between life, death, and the earth itself:

*The soil is in ferment, O friend
Behold the diversity.
The soil is the horse, so is the rider
The soil chases the soil, and we hear the clanging of soil
The soil kills the soil, with weapons of the soil.
That soil with more on it, is arrogance
The soil is the garden so is its beauty
The soil admires the soil in all its wondrous forms
After the circle of life is done it returns to the soil
Answer the riddle O Bulleh, and take this burden off my head.*
(Puri and Shangari, *Bulleh Shah: The Love-Intoxicated Iconoclast*)

Of the oceans of air and water, of fields of soil, of ‘beasts, fire, water, stones, and corn,’ Emerson quotes George Herbert in bringing to mind both the utility of nature and the inference of our own stewardship:

*“More servants wait on man
than he’ll take notice of.”—*

(*Nature*, 24)

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Sufi Influence on Pakistani Politics and Culture

By Muhammed Hassanali

Religious Underpinnings

The etymologies of the term Sufi are various. The obvious root is *suf* (wool), referring to the wool robes that the early mystics wore. The term has also been connected with *safa* (purity) or *safwa* (the chosen ones), emphasizing purifying of the heart and the role of divine grace in choosing the saintly. Another link is with *suffa* (bench), referring to a group of poor Muslims (contemporaries of the Prophet Mohammad) known as the People of the Bench, signifying a community of shared poverty.

In practice, the term “Sufi” was reserved for ideal usage, and Sufis referred to themselves in other terms such as *abid* (slave, devotee), *zahid* (ascetic), *dervish* or *faqir* (impoverished), *arif* (knower of spiritual truth), *salik* (spiritual traveler), or *ashiq* (lover). They also made differentiations between spiritual masters, called *sheikhs*, *pirs*, or *murshids* (guides), and their disciples, known as *murids* (seekers). A Sufi saint was known as *wali* or friend of God.

While acknowledging that the term “Sufi” was not current at the time of the Prophet, Sufi theorists maintained that this specialization in spirituality arose in parallel with other disciplines such as Islamic law and Koranic exegesis. Sufism was inspired by the Koran. A believer meditating on the meaning of the Koran would be filled with Allah’s overwhelming transcendence, realize his total dependence on Allah, and as a result would completely surrender to Allah’s will. While objects in nature submit to Allah’s will unconsciously, the Sufi does so consciously. He is like the birds and the flowers in his yielding to the Creator; like them, he reflects the Divine Intellect to his own degree. However, he reflects it actively, they passively. The Sufi thus strives to understand Divine Reality “from the inside.” Sufism also entails ethical and spiritual goals that function to open the possibilities of the soul.

Sufi theorists claim that the earliest Sufis include the Prophet Mohammad and his chief companions. The *bayah* (oath of allegiance) to the Prophet became the model for the master-disciple relationship in Sufism. The Prophet’s meditation

in a cave on Mount Hira (outside Mecca) was seen as the basis for Sufi practices of seclusion and retreat. Sufis regard the Prophet's experiences as the basis for their spiritual experience and entertain imitating his example as a way of attaining or strengthening their own divine qualities. Hence veneration of the Prophet Mohammad, both for his own qualities and in his role as intercessor for all humanity, found a place in Sufi piety as it diffused through Muslim society.

Aside from the obligatory and supererogatory prayers, the most important Sufi practices are *zikr* (remembrance) and *sama* (listening or audition). Through *zikr*, the Sufi recollected Allah by reciting the names of Allah. This recitation could be silent or spoken aloud and drew from the list of ninety-nine names ascribed to Allah. As with the supererogatory prayers, *zikr* aimed at internalizing the Koran and its contents, in order to obtain closeness to Allah. As meditations, these practices aimed to empty the heart of anything but Allah and to begin establishing qualities of the divine in the Sufi. *Zikr* is derived from the Koranic injunction that instructs believers to remember Allah. Among Sufis this duty evolved into an individual or a group exercise involving the repetition of a phrase (usually Koranic). The more sophisticated methods of *zikr* involve breath control, body movements, and other techniques to gain control over the five senses as well as the psyche and imagination.

While *zikr* recitation may originally have been restricted to adepts, as a kind of group chanting this practice could also be accessible to people on a broad popular scale. Simple chanting of phrases like "there is no deity but Allah" (*la ilaha illa allah*) not only expressed the fundamental negation and affirmation of Islamic theology, but also made it possible for a wider public to adopt the practices of Sufism. One of the advantages of *zikr* was that it could be practiced by anyone, regardless of age, sex, or ritual purity, at any time.

Sama involved listening to music, usually with a group. The music was often accompanied by Koranic chants or singing of mystical poetry and the recital intended to spark a mystical experience within the auditors. Those most affected by the *sama* rise up to dance in unison with the music. Depending on the Sufi group, the dance can be a marvel of aesthetic movement or the frenetic writhings of the seemingly possessed.

Other widely encountered forms of Sufi practice also include music and poetry, which take on different regional forms in accordance with local traditions. Although conservative Islamic legal tradition has been wary of musical instruments as innovations not present during the time of the Prophet, the rich and sophisticated musical traditions have furnished irresistible and highly developed forms for communicating Sufi teachings, particularly when combined with poetry. Sufis in fact speak mostly of "listening" (*sama*), emphasizing the spiritual role of the listener far

more than that of the musical performer, and the focus is upon the words of poems that may or may not be accompanied by musical instruments. Sufi poets produced literature in several genres ranging from the quatrain (*rubai*) to the lyric (*ghazal*) and the ode (*qasida*), along with the epic couplet (*masnavi*).

The complex and esoteric nature of Sufism placed it far beyond the reach of most Muslims. It was ritual exercises (specifically *zikr* and *sama*) that helped fill the gap and minister to the immediate needs of the faithful. Thus Sufism came to represent, for many, not abstruse theory but concrete practice that was accessible to all. The emphasis on *zikr* and *sama* helped blur the distinction between mystical experience that is attained after serious spiritual training and experience that is self-induced. Unsophisticated sessions of *zikr* and *sama* often consisted of self-hypnosis, hysteria, drug-induced states, and other violent emotions that pass for mystical experience.

Early Development

Two interrelated movements in the early Islamic period gave rise to (or at least tolerance of) mysticism. First was the movement of piety which required prayer, purity of intention, and renunciation of self-interest and worldly pleasure. Second was the movement of meditation on the meaning of the Koran (especially the esoteric meaning). The Sufi movement during the first centuries of Islam was characterized by informal association of like-minded individuals.

At the same time, Sufism developed into a legitimate esoteric science of religion (*ilm*) whose principal aim was to seek a direct experience from Allah, and a profounder (esoteric) understanding of the Koran and Allah. This was attained through *fana* where the Sufi “dies in one’s self” and is “absorbed” into Allah. *Baqa* is the Sufi’s existence after *fana*, when he or she lives in Allah. Alongside the mystical experience is the ethical responsibility to return to community life, fulfill the obligations of Muslim life and to display the impact of divine experience. When the mystical experience overwhelms the individual self to the point that human existence has no meaning, that Sufi is termed “intoxicated”, the “sober” mystic’s life, on the other hand, takes on heightened ethical values. Most Sufis drew nearer to Allah and gained esoteric knowledge through an arduous process of study, meditation, ascetic retreat, and spiritual exercises. The Sufi’s progress along this spiritual path was measured in states (*ahwal*) that were experienced and corresponded to stations (*maqamat*).

The growth of Sufism was partly a reaction against the worldly orientation taken by the Muslim community in the wake of the conquest of Middle Eastern lands in the seventh and eighth centuries, as well as against political violence and

official corruption. Sufis benefited from the mystical traditions of Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, and they subsequently played a significant role in the indigenization of Islam among the peoples living in lands governed by Muslim rulers. They carried Islam via trade routes into sub-Saharan Africa, India, Central Asia, southeastern Europe and the Caucasus, and Southeast Asia.

By the end of the eighth century, Sufis began to formulate a vocabulary of interior spiritual experience, based in large part on the Koran and the emerging Islamic religious sciences. Notable features of Sufi practices included intensive and protracted prayer (not only the five obligatory ritual prayers daily, but also the five supererogatory or “extra credit” prayers) and meditation on the meanings of the Koran. The stark asceticism of the very early Sufis, with its rejection of the corrupt world, was tempered by the quest to find God through love. Other Sufis contributed to the development of an extensive analysis of spiritual states, as a natural result of prolonged meditative retreats.

In the early centuries of Islam, the khanaqahs served as the meeting place of the Sufis, where they performed their various spiritual exercises (especially the invocation) and where those who were ready were able to receive initiation into the Divine Mysteries. Here, those who had not been satisfied with formal learning alone, but searched after the light of certainty and sought direct vision of the truth, left the discussion of the schools to discover ecstasies of contemplation (generally under the direction of a spiritual master). In this manner, the Sufi centers served as a center of learning, but a learning which was not to be found in books, and discovery of which it was not sufficient to train the mental faculties alone. They served as centers where the qualified could realize the highest form of knowledge (gnosis), the attainment of which required purification of the soul as well as of the mind.

Introduction of Sufism in Pakistan

The initial entry of Muslim armies into Pakistan came in the first century after the death of the Prophet Mohammad. The Umayyad caliph in Damascus sent an expedition to Baluchistan and Sind in 711 led by Muhammad bin Qasim (for whom Karachi’s second port is named). The expedition went as far north as Multan but was not able to retain that region and was not successful in expanding Islamic rule to other parts of the region. It was trade and missionary activity that had a more lasting influence on indigenous culture. Coastal trade and the presence of a Muslim community in Sind facilitated significant cultural exchanges and missionary activity which brought Sufism in its wake.

Details of the early Sufis are sketchy at best, while evidence of their activities and long-term influence remain areas of study. Some of the early pioneers

include Mohammed Alfi who arrived as early as bin Qasim's expedition in 711. It is believed that Alfi conducted his missionary work in Kashmir. Sheikh Ismail Bukhari came before Mahmud Ghaznavi's invasions. Sheikh Abdur Rahman did his missionary work in Ajmer and authored the first work on Islam in Hindi. "The Ismaili missionary Abdullah landed near Cambay in 1067 AD and worked in Gujarat when the country was governed by Sidhraj Jai Singh. He and his Jain teacher Huma Charya are said to have been converted to Islam when there was no recorded Muslim invasion" (Hollister). These and other Sufis introduced Islam by synthesizing it to some extent with local beliefs. Hence the Ismaili and Imam Shahis *ginans* (hymns), for example, make numerous references to Hinduism and local culture. They use the prevailing literary traditions for sacred literature to convey the Islamic message. Hence some of the *ginans* bear a striking similarity to Hindu *bajans* (hymns).

Sufi Social Organization

Mystical theory and expression characterized Sufism as much as its social dimension did. From the beginning, companionship (*suhbah*) was considered essential for progress in one's spiritual life. Fluid interaction among Sufis soon evolved into a more structured relationship of master and disciples adding a new level of social complexity. Not only would disciples visit their masters, but many also took up residence with their masters. Initially, the master and his disciples remained a cohesive unit until the master's death, and then the group disbanded. Later, many Sufi groups became self-perpetuating social organizations. No longer was the group's survival dependent on a living master; authority was passed from master to disciple, thus providing a stable structural basis for continued growth and development.

As Sufi communities gradually coalesced, Sufi masters were increasingly associated with residential hospices (*khanaqah* or *tekke*). These hospices were typically places dedicated to prayer, study of the Koran, meditation, and communal meals. As with later Sufi hospices, travelers and the needy were welcome and Sufi masters would impart instruction and advice to their students and visitors. Even during this early period, Sufi centers depended on patronage. Some depended entirely on the ruling establishment, but others drew support from a broader base encompassing not only the nobility, but also the artisans.

During the 10th and 11th centuries, Sufi adepts began to organize into groups of masters and their disciples that developed into mystical orders known as *tariqas* (paths), each with its own distinct doctrines, practices, and spiritual genealogy (*sil-sila*) which all members had to study and memorize. Sufis met in mosques, homes, and *madrasas*, but their chief centers were hospices and retreat centers (*khanaqahs*

or *tekkes*). These usually contained tombs of former sheikhs and members of the order, and often became popular shrines that would attract devotees seeking blessings (*baraka*) from the saint.

The practice of Sufi masters lending their name to specific spiritual methods (*tariqas*) commenced in the twelfth century. It was common to characterize each method (or way) as a “chain” (*silsila*), with the masters and disciplines constituting links. These chains were traced backwards to end (actually begin) with the Prophet Mohammad. Nearly all of these chains reach the Prophet through his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abu Talib.

The *silsila* is more precisely a genealogy tracing the names of one master to his master and so on back to the Prophet Mohammad. The centrality of *silsila* in Sufism has an analogous tradition in the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Mohammad) literature. The literary structure of a *hadith* has two parts: the chain of transmitters (*isnad*) and the body of the text (*matn*). According to Muslim tradition, the authenticity of the *hadith* is guaranteed by the reliability of the *isnad*. Just as the words of the Prophet have been preserved through the *isnad*, so too have the teachings of a particular Sufi *tariqa* remained alive through *silsila*. Just as for Muslims the *isnads* solidly ground the *hadiths* in the period of original revelation; the *silsilas* for Sufis provides them with religious legitimacy. Even though Sufi *tariqas* may vary considerably in their teachings and attitudes toward mystical experience, they each can claim, through their spiritual genealogies, to be solidly based on the foundations of Sufism.

The institutional spread of Sufism offered the community the prospect of a spiritual community organized around a charismatic teacher whose authority was derived from a lineage going back to the Prophet himself. While dedicated membership in Sufi orders remained confined to an elite, mass participation in the reverence for saints at their tombs has been (and continues to be) a typical feature of Sufi organizations.

While it is convenient to refer to these organizations as “orders” (with an implicit analogy to monastic orders), the analogy is inexact. Sufi orders are less centrally organized and have a more fluid hierarchical structure, which is formulated in terms of different types of initiations. Complicating this situation is the phenomenon of multiple initiation through which individual Sufis could receive instruction in the methods of various orders while maintaining a primary allegiance to one. Sufi orders are not inherently driven by competing and exclusive ideologies, although competition in the sociopolitical arena is certainly not unknown. The majority of Sufi orders have a Sunni orientation, although Shia orders do exist as well. While it has been suggested that the Sufi orders played an important role in

spreading Islam on a popular level, there is little historical evidence to suggest that premodern Sufi leaders took any interest in seeking the conversion of non-Muslims.

The major social impact of Sufi orders in terms of religion was to popularize the spiritual practices of the Sufis on a mass scale. The interior orientation of the informal movement of early Sufism became available to a much wider public through participation in shrine rituals, the circulation of hagiographies, and the dispensing of various degrees of instruction in *zikr*. Elaborate initiation rituals developed, in which the master's presentation of articles such as a dervish cloak, hat, or staff would signify the disciple's entrance into the order. A frequent feature of initiation was the requirement that the disciple copy by hand the genealogical "tree" of the order, which would link the disciple to the entire chain of masters going all the way back to the Prophet.

The institutionalization of *tariqas* and emphasis on *silsila* enhanced substantially the religious and political position of the *sheikh*. Whereas in the past, the *sheikh* functioned primarily as an expert and confidant, he now became a repository of spiritual power as well. A *sheikh's* lineage did not provide simply a list of teachers; it implied that the spiritual power of each of these great Sufis had been transmitted to this last member of the line. *Sheikhs* of great Sufi orders, therefore, took on superhuman qualities. They became known as *awliya* (sing. *wali*) which means intimates or friends of Allah. Their spiritual perfection raised them far above the level of their disciples and the masses of Muslims. The term *wali* is often translated as saint, which is misleading as there is no religious hierarchy in Islam empowered to canonize individuals as saints. Rather the status of *wali* is attained through public acclamation. Sufis believe that the *awliya* have the ability to confer *baraka* (blessing) to disciples or devotees, and that the *baraka* has the potential to transform an individual's spirituality as well as provide concrete material blessings. *Baraka* is often transmitted through touch (similar to the laying of hands or application of relics).

The *awliya* became objects of veneration both during their lifetime and after their deaths. It was believed that some of these *awliya* possessed the power of miracles (*karamat*). The extraordinary powers of the *awliya* were not diminished after their death; rather their intercession often appeared more efficacious. Their tombs (usually erected near their homes) became vibrant pilgrimage centers – especially commemorating the *wali's* death anniversary.

Full members committed themselves to the *sheikh*, who initiated them into the *tariqa*. Initiation rites varied, and most included a pledge of allegiance (*bayah*). The *sheikh* bestowed the initiate a patched frock (*khirqah*) as a sign of entry into the Sufi *tariqa*. Members were encouraged to subject themselves completely to the *sheikh's* will ("to be like dead bodies in the hands of body-washers"). Depending

on the *tariqa*, members remained celibate while others married; some lived in poverty while others lived comfortably.

There was great diversity within various Sufi practices. Particular orders were known for distinctive practices such as the loud *zikr* recitation (as practiced by Rifaiyya) in contrast to the silent *zikr* favored by the Naqshbandiyya. Some (such as the Chishtiyya) integrated music and even dance in their practices while other resolutely shunned these activities. Some (such as the early Chishti orders) kept politics at arm's length, refused offers of land grants and refused to entertain rulers who visited them, while others had a history of close association with the ruling elite (such as the Suhrawardiyya and the Naqshbandiyya).

In Pakistan, the ownership and maintenance of Sufi tombs fell to the family members. The devotion of many pilgrims created a class of hereditary custodians who were in charge of the finances and operations of the tomb-shrines. These were sometimes combined with hospices where teachings of that *tariqa* took place. Increasingly, the *wali's* tomb came to be an independent institution, in some cases functioning as the center of massive pilgrimage during festivals. Two common festivals were *mawlid* (the *wali's* birthday), and *urs* (literally "wedding") which symbolized the death anniversary as the "wedding" of the *wali's* soul with Allah. On a social level, these tombs were commonly connected to lodges or hospices that maintained open kitchens where all visitors were welcome, thus enhancing the public development of Sufism.

Criticism to Sufism

Religious criticism of Sufi practices and doctrines started to occur in the late ninth century. Sufism emerged from this crisis by insisting on strict adherence to the norms and disciplines of Islamic religious scholarship, while at the same time it cultivated an esoteric language and style appropriate to the discussion of subtle interior experiences. Early Sufi writers emphasized Sufism as the "knowledge of realities," inseparable from yet far beyond the knowledge of Islamic law and scripture.

Conservative *ulama* would intermittently attack Sufis for such practices, considering saint veneration in particular to be a form of idolatry (*shirk*) or at best a corrupt innovation (*bidaa*). They also condemned the Sufi *zikr*, as well as the *sama*. Sufis for their part criticized jurists for being too concerned with their reputations and the letter of the law (rather than adhering to the spirit of the law). Nevertheless, a degree of consensus was reached between the *ulama* and mystics.

Sufi Social Organization in Medieval Muslim India

Though little is known in detail of early Sufi activity in Pakistan, the spread of Islam is usually credited to the work of Sufi mystics who first established their *khanaqahs* in western Punjab. While there was Sufi presence before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, missionary activity intensified in the years following the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. Most of this activity occurred in western Punjab and was carried out primarily by the Chishti and Suhrawardy Sufi orders. By the fourteenth century these orders were well established with an extensive network of *khanaqahs*. These served as local out-posts of Islam which linked the diffuse, tribally organized population of the Punjab to the larger Muslim community. Subsequently it was these local centers which provided the focus for Islamic organization in most of western Punjab, and it was to these centers that the population looked for religious leadership. The establishment and evolution of the *khanaqahs* not only generally corresponds to the establishment of Islamic political rule in medieval India, but also to the spread of Islam in medieval India.

Success of a *khanaqah* depended largely on the resident Sufi's ability to understand and empathize with the social and cultural climate of the surrounding areas. The principal support for the upkeep of *khanaqahs* in the early stages came from three sources: *futuh* (unsolicited charity), *jagirs* (land grants), and *waqfs* (religious trusts). Subsequently, the *khanaqahs* became an important institution of Muslim and non-Muslim community life in medieval India. Their importance arose from the spiritual, social welfare, educational, and cultural functions they performed for the local population. The congenial, unstructured social environment and the unassuming ways of the mystics contrasted with the stratified social structure of Medieval Indian society. During the early period, *khanaqah* social organization was characterized by Islamic ideals of equality and fraternity notwithstanding the discriminatory practices of the Muslim ruling classes.

Spirituality was sometimes gauged by the manifestation of supernatural gifts (called *karamat*). Those who attained the highest mystical states were called saints, or more precisely, the "Friends of God" (*awliya Allah*). The *karamat* of these persons were truly extraordinary, ranging from visions and apparitions of God or the prophets to clairvoyance and the power to intercede with God. Such thaumaturgic powers were considered a divine dispensation, a sign of divine favor, which emanated from God.

With the passage of time the *khanaqahs*, as a socio-religious organization, evolved and changed. The spirituality of the mystic and knowledge of mysticism shifted from a learned process to a hereditary one. The spiritual power of the Sufi master came to be transmitted through his descendents who became the center of

devotion of the followers. Deceased masters were usually buried in the *khanaqah*, and veneration of Sufi graves began to take hold as a custom. This was an important change and eventually led to the development of the *piri-muridi* (master-disciple) paradigm in which the *pir* (master) was the director and the *murid* (disciple) a faithful follower was obliged to surrender completely to the *pir*. The *pir*'s charisma was institutionalized as the head of the cult association, and the criteria of succession shifted from a merit based one to one based on heredity. This in turn gave rise to a whole new class of people who by virtue of descent from a Sufi saint could claim spiritual status. They are also known as *sajjada-nishins* (literally "he who sits on the prayer carpet").

The hereditary religious authority of the *sajjada-nashin* was largely based on the transmission of *baraka*, or religious charisma, from the original saint to his descendants and to his tomb. Because of this *baraka*, which linked the *sajjada-nashin* to the original saint, he was recognized as a religious intermediary who could intercede on behalf of the devotee and channel God's favor to the devotee. The effect of such hereditary leadership gave stability to the Sufi shrines. The exercise of this religious authority was associated with certain religious practices at the shrine. The links of the *sajjada-nashin* to the original saint and the links of the original saint to God were dramatized every year in a ceremony marking the death anniversary of the saint (*urs*). The *urs* ceremonies themselves provided symbolic justification for the position of the *sajjada-nashin*, who normally had to perform prescribed ceremonial duties which underscored his special links to the original saint as the inheritor of *baraka*, and thus defined his effectiveness as religious intermediary. The *pir*'s role as religious intermediary was formalized by the *pir* providing *baraka* and the *murid* making payments or offerings. This did not bind the *murid* to follow any rigid spiritual discipline; rather, it bound the *murid* to accept the religious leadership of the *pir*.

The prime spiritual responsibility of a *pir* to his followers was to act as a mediator between them and God. The original saint brought his followers closer to God by means of his spiritual blessing. He was the channel through which communication with God flowed. At his death his tomb became a source of blessing, but the blessing can only be obtained through his living representative (the *sajjada-nashin*) – hence the need for the *pirs*. Access to God for *murids* was through a chain of authority: from the *sajjada-nashin*, to the original saint, to the founder of the Sufi Order to which the saint belonged, to the Prophet, who had direct access to God. This spiritual chain of authority was reinforced by heredity. Others can come into contact with this blessing and benefit from it, but they cannot transmit it, because blessing cannot flow through their impure or underdeveloped souls. Since the members of a tribe cannot themselves transmit blessing to others, they needed

to maintain contact with the source through which blessing flowed to them. The source of blessing was the saint with whom they were spiritually connected through *bayat*.

Political & Economic Influence in Medieval Muslim India

The shrine's spiritual relationship was reinforced by an economic one: the *sajjada-nishin* annually made a circuit of the tribes and villages traditionally tied to the shrine to collect *nazar* (contributions). The circuit further reinforced the association of a shrine with a particular territory over which it had direct influence.

Religious and political structures, however, had never been merely separate-but-parallel ones. Saints, since they controlled access to God, had an enormous influence over their followers and could use their influence for political purposes. This attracted the attention of the ruling class which, for spiritual as well as for political reasons, sought cooperation from the *khanaqahs* in maintaining political stability in the country. The Muslim rulers, realizing the political importance of the saints, tried to bring the *pirs* under their control by granting them large properties and contributing to the building of shrines. Government support of the shrines was one way of ensuring the legitimacy of the ruler among the population.

Besides the critical and elemental roles they played in the spread of Islam and the growth of Islamic culture, the *khanaqahs* also influenced the evolution of the social structure of Muslim society. The substantial *jagirs* granted by the state not only obtained the *khanaqahs* cooperation in maintaining political and social stability, but also used their influence and power over their disciples to provide military recruits for the state at short notice. These land grants (*Madad-e-Mash*), were given first by the sultans of Delhi and then by the Mughal emperors and later by the British. In fact, under Mughal rule the Sufis and their descendents were known as *Laskar-e-Dua* (literally "army of prayers") and were considered as important as the regular army during periods of political upheavals and warfare in the country.

Ownership and proprietorship of large estates as well as their political alliance with the state made the spiritual leaders of popular Islam an important economic and political force in the society. Given the extended kinship and *biradari* (brotherhood) system that characterizes Muslim social organization, their kin became beneficiaries of economic and political status. This extended the *pirs*' influence in the economic and political spheres, which coincided with the interests of the other Muslim landed classes (*zamindars*), and evolved into a *pir-zamindar* alliance. Through intermarriage and social alliances with other Muslim *zamindars* (landholders) the *pir-zamindar* elite came to constitute the core of Muslim society, occupying a dominant position in the country's social structure. This structural

position made the *pirs* a formidable force wielding enormous political, economic, and spiritual influence over large numbers of their disciples who resided primarily in villages.

The relations of the *sajjada-nashins* with the Muslim state followed much the same pattern as the relations of these local chiefs with the state. As the links between the shrines and the Mughal state were snapped with the collapse of central Muslim political authority, many of the old *sajjada-nashins* who had wielded local political authority under the Mughals were transformed into local chieftains, who were increasingly isolated from the larger Islamic community.

The Advent of Colonial Rule

After the British annexed Punjab, they soon discovered that in developing their own rural administration they could not ignore the political influence in the rural areas that many of these *pirs* had acquired. Many *pirs* were accordingly honored by the British and given positions of local administrative authority. In the nineteenth century the British attempted to consolidate a system of rural administration which relied, particularly in west Punjab, on the local political influence of landed, often tribally based, intermediaries. In this regard the British were not departing from the established traditions of political control in western Punjab. At the same time the British sought to bolster the position of these rural leaders by isolating the rural areas from the growing economic and political influences emanating from the cities which might have tended to undermine the position of these leaders. This policy found its fullest expression in the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 which recognized the *pirs* as “landed gentry” and in general terms barred the non-agricultural population from acquiring land in the rural areas. In the twentieth century, as the British attempted to give political cohesion to a class of landed rural intermediaries who could be counted on to support their government, they recognized the leading *pirs* as an important part of this class.

During the colonial era, when much of the Muslim world fell under European domination, Sufi institutions played various roles. The overthrow of local elites by foreign invaders removed traditional sources of patronage for Sufism. Hereditary custodians of Sufi shrines became integrated into the landholding classes and became further entrenched as political leaders. Sufi responses to colonialism ranged from accommodation to confrontation. The cooperation of these Sufi leaders became essential in later independence movements directed against colonial control. With the overthrow of traditional elites by European conquest, Sufi institutions in some regions remained the only surviving Islamic social structures, and became the de facto custodians of cultural and religious knowledge. As they

were the only centers of resistance against European aggression, they furnished the principle leadership for anti-colonial struggles and later participated in shaping the vision of their nation-states. The colonial and postcolonial eras made it necessary for Sufism to come to terms with new roles dictated by the technological and ideological transformations of modernity.

Postcolonial Developments

In the postcolonial period, Sufi institutions in Muslim countries had an ambiguous political position, which was determined by the Sufi institutions' relation to the nation-state. Governments in many Muslim countries inherited centralized bureaucratic organizations of their colonial predecessors, some of which went back to pre-colonial bureaucracies. Some countries made efforts to bring Sufi institutions under governmental control. In some of these cases, officials appeared at Sufi festivals to direct popular reverence for saints into legitimizing their regimes, and governments also attempted to control the large amount of donations attracted to the shrines. State sponsorship of Sufi festivals also aimed to enroll support against fundamentalist groups critical of the government, and to redirect reverence for saints towards nationalist goals. Nonetheless, many of the largest and liveliest Sufi organizations flourish without official recognition.

The Muslim poet-philosopher Sir Muhammad Iqbal first proposed the idea of a Muslim state in the subcontinent during his address to the Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930. His proposal referred to the four provinces of Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the North-West Frontier Province – essentially what would become post-1971 Pakistan. Iqbal's idea gave concrete form to the "Two Nations Theory" of two distinct nations in the subcontinent based on religion (Islam and Hinduism) and with different historical backgrounds, social customs, cultures, and social mores. Pakistan's independence in 1947 marked a watershed event in the religious and political lives of Indian Muslims. Today, it is difficult to imagine the emergence of Pakistan without a case made on the basis of religion, and without religious support for Pakistan.

Islam was thus the basis for creation and unification of a separate state, but Islam was not expected to serve as the model of government. Mohammad Ali Jinnah made his commitment to secularism in Pakistan clear in his inaugural address when he said, "You will find that in the course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as Citizens of the State." This vision of a Muslim majority state in which religious minorities would share equally in its development was questioned shortly after independence.

The debate continues today amid questions of the rights of Ahmadiyyas, issuance of identity cards denoting religious affiliation, government intervention in the personal practice of Islam, and other issues.

For most of Muslim history, politics and religion have been intertwined both conceptually and practically in Muslim lands. The Medina Constitution and subsequent governance during the time of the Prophet served as precedents of governance and taxation. During the time of Muslim empires, from the Umayyads (661–750) and the Abbasids (750–1258) to the Mughals (1526–1858) and the Ottomans (1300–1923), religion and statehood were treated as one. Classical Muslim thought propounded the notion that the purpose of the state is to provide an environment where Muslims can properly practice their religion. If a leader failed in this, the people have a right to depose him.

The concept of Pakistan as envisioned by the rural population (specifically the *pirs*) was in traditional terms as the establishment of a religious state, ruled by the traditional leaders of society but firmly based on the Sharia. The crucial role of the *pirs* in the Muslim League's election victory in 1945 was also an important pointer to the nature of the Pakistan state which was to emerge. The victory for Pakistan represented only a call for a new religious definition of the old order, not for a new alignment of political power such as the reformist *ulama* had called for. The further definition of this system, however, remained to be developed in the new Muslim state.

Leaders of Pakistan found that the organizational structure of the shrines, traditionally maintained by hereditary *pirs*, was a force that hampered their efforts to control the political and social organization of the country. Leaders of other Muslim countries (such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia) also decided that the conceptual and organizational structures of Sufism and the shrines were incompatible with their political and religious goals. In postcolonial Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the solution was to suppress the shrines. In Pakistan, Ayub Khan's government established a different policy toward the shrines, which his successors continued with minor modifications. Their policies towards the shrines were carried out through the Department of Auqaf (formed shortly after independence). The essential goal was to enhance the shrines and the Sufi origins of these shrines for the glorification of Islam and Pakistan. At the same time the intent was to strip the hereditary *pirs* of their traditional functions.

Pakistan, despite its nominal Islamic affiliation, was also a modern national state. It originated in an Islam that had been defined in nationalist political terms but excluded the personal and moral dimensions of Muslim religiosity. The leaders of the movement to establish an independent Pakistan were entirely secularized in their education and lifestyles. They viewed religion as confined to the personal

sphere and envisioned their state as essentially secular. Hence they had no commitment to establishing a traditional Islamic state based on Classical Muslim thought. Their rhetoric was Muslim in form, but the content was nationalistic.

Pakistan's Transition into a Nation State

As Sufi tradition developed, there was a partial split between Sufism as rigorous spiritual discipline transmitted from spiritual teacher to qualified disciple on the one hand, and *piri-muridi* relationship which pejoratively meant blind devotion of the *murid* to a *pir*, whom the follower expected to act as a spiritual mediator. Such *pirs* were exemplified by the traditional *sajjada-nishins*. As part of an assault on the traditional meaning of *pir*, which gave him almost magical power, the Auqaf Department stressed the aspect of Sufism that Iqbal had drawn on and himself embodied: the original Sufi as poet and social reformer.

If these saints were pantheists, believing that God is immanent in all things, then there is no need, according to their own doctrine, for any mediator between God and man. It can be inferred that the role and responsibility of the individual in such a system is analogous to the role that citizen is expected to play in a Muslim democracy as an informed, voting citizen participating directly in the government: the government is "immanent" in its citizens. Literature distributed by the Auqaf Department also discussed conversion, but its significance was shifted away from emphasis on the conversion of some tribes by a particular saint toward the idea of the saints as a collective body who worked together to convert Pakistan as a nation to Islam.

Land reform acts were efforts to remove the landlord from his position as economic mediator and thus to remove him as a political mediator as well. The idea was that by divesting the landlords of economic power, they would also lose control of their votes. The hope was also that dividing up the land would be politically popular. To that end, the West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinance of 1959 gave the government the power to take direct control of and to manage shrines, mosques, and other properties dedicated to religious purposes. The act was superseded by the West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinance of 1961 and later by the Auqaf (Federal Control) Act of 1976, each of which further extended the authority of the Auqaf Department.

The power of the *pir* as a political mediator was difficult to eliminate as long as he retained the role of religious mediator. Only by changing the religious significance of the *pir* and the world view of his followers could any real political reorganization be effective. Thus the removal of *waqf* land from the control of the *sajjada-nishins* was equivalent to the breaking up of the lands of major landlords,

but one more step was required: the religious hold of the *sajjada-nishin* also needed to be broken.

In addition to developing the shrine areas as centers of social welfare, the Auqaf Department also made improvements on the shrines themselves, thus demonstrating that the government can satisfactorily fulfill the caretaking functions of the *sajjada-nishins*. The emphasis on educating missionaries suggested that the early Sufi saints were being compared to the *ulama* being trained to serve as *imams* in local villages. The emphasis seemed to be on minimizing the distinction between the saints and the *ulama*, and between Sufism and Sharia.

Instead of the traditional Sufi concern with the course of spiritual development of the individual, which included esoteric understanding for the spiritually advanced, the stress shifted to conformity of the Sharia, which in turn expected to lead to spiritual growth within the community. Thus, the Sufi was to be seen primarily as an *alim*, whose main function was to educate and guide his followers in the proper application and understanding of Islamic law.

Ayub sought to impose a nationally oriented bureaucratic administration that would overcome existing regional ties and disruptive political parties. This strong central government would be reinforced by the bond of Islam and by rapid economic growth. Part of his strategy was to educate the rural population in the democratic process, so that they could intelligently elect their representatives. Some of Ayub's strategies were common to other modernizing countries, such as those concerning education and the provision of services through a national government. Unique to Pakistan was his effort to change the significance of the shrines and of the saints attached to them. He also used the shrines directly as a vehicle for modernization.

Ayub adopted Javid Iqbal's suggestion, which was to develop a new ideology with respect to the saints and shrines. On the one hand, the Auqaf Department had to demonstrate that it could maintain the shrines as well as, if not better than, the *sajjada-nishins*. But this task alone was not adequate, because to most people the *sajjada-nishins* were not mere caretakers of the shrines. They were also seen as possessors and dispensers of blessing and hence wielded spiritual power. From the perspective of their followers, failure to follow the wishes of the *sajjada-nishin* in any sphere of activity was thought to have serious consequences. The government therefore had to demonstrate simultaneously that the *sajjada-nishin* was superfluous in both his religious and his caretaking functions.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's strategy was to eliminate the middlemen who were the backbone of Ayub's economic and political organization. He nationalized many industries and appealed directly to the ordinary citizen. As the head of the People's party and successor to Ayub's fallen regime, he was acutely aware of the power of

mass protest. He tried to be a charismatic leader, whom everyone would look up to as the supreme benefactor. He too used the shrines to carry out his policy. Instead of using the shrine festivals to teach villagers modern agricultural techniques, for instance, he emphasized governmental participation in the rituals themselves, thus linking religiosity with nationalistic goals.

Road to Islamization

Pakistan's "Islamic Identity" consistently generated tensions within its political system as the need for state religious expression and pluralistic governance placed competing demands on political ideology and hence the political process. At the socio-cultural level, Islam remained an important factor in everyday life. However, there was considerable variation in the ways ordinary Pakistanis articulated, interpreted, and practiced their faith, and worked out its implications in their individual and collective lives. Even today, Pakistan continues to wrestle with what kind of Islamic state it should be. While most agree that Pakistan's constitution and government should reflect Islamic ideology, the issue was how to relate Islam to the needs of a modern state.

The first serious steps to Islamization were taken by General Zia-ul-Haq's government which emphasized the idea that the original saints were themselves *ulama*, trained religious scholars who followed the Sharia. His government, took an essentially reformist position, and stressed the synthesis of Sufi and *alim* in its definition of the saint, while at the same time denying the legitimacy of the hereditary *pir*. Zia emphasized the saints as models of the pious Muslim, as devout men who observed all the laws of Islam (specifically strict adherence to the Sharia).

Zia pursued an Islamization program within a complex ideological framework. His stance was in contrast to the popular culture (i.e. most people were "personally" very religious but not "publicly" religious). The introduction of *zakat* and *ushr* collection as well as the enforcement of Sharia law exasperated the fault lines of doctrinal and jurist differences among the various interpretations of Islam. The question as to which interpretation of the Sharia should form the basis of public policy became the major source of conflict. These controversies caused sectarian riots and assassination of several prominent *ulama* since the late 1980s.

An unexpected outcome was that by relying on policy grounded in Islam, the state fomented factionalism: by legislating what is Islamic and what is not, Islam itself could no longer provide unity because it was then being defined to exclude previously included groups. This resulted in unrest and sectarian violence. Sufi practices were branded as being "un-Islamic" and those who indulged in such practices were straying from the "true" Islamic path by participating in *shirk* (idola-

try) or *bidaa* (corrupt innovation of religious practices). More profoundly, in a move that reached into every home, the state had attempted to dictate a specific ideal image of women in Islamic society, an ideal that was largely antithetical to that existing in popular sentiment and in everyday life.

In August 1988 Zia and some of his senior military commanders died in a plane crash. This development led to the installation of a civilian government. Unfortunately, the civilian government's powers were restricted by the military in the political process. Post-Zia civilian regimes were largely unsuccessful in reconciling the demands of the *ulama* for imposing Islamic law with the reformist demands for a pluralistic multiethnic society and attempts at further Islamization continued.

The proliferation of *madrasas* and support for *jihad* in Afghanistan and Kashmir in the 1990s lead to the formation of several Islamist groups (some of them armed). The Taliban's genesis can be associated with the rise of *madrasas* in Pakistan during the 1980s and 1990s. Taliban controlled Afghanistan (from the mid-1990s to early 2000) also facilitated the growth of several Islamist groups in Pakistan that shared the Taliban's vision of Islam. This vision advocated the eradication of "non-Islamic" cultural norms and symbols to revert to Divine favor, and hence called for the eradication of practically all forms of Sufi practices – especially saint veneration.

In October 1999 General Pervez Musharraf declared a state of emergency and effectively took control of the government. He portrayed his regime as reformist and emphasized a moderate form of Islam, which he articulated as "enlightened moderation." Initially he took measures to curb Islamic militants. However in 2000 he withdrew his proposal to reform the procedural aspects of the Blasphemy Law (which seeks the death penalty for any one accused of making derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammad). Moreover the government continued to support the Taliban in Afghanistan until September 11, 2001.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and Pakistan's subsequent alliance with the United States on the "War on Terror" compelled Pakistan to curtail the support it had provided to Islamist groups. Increased foreign pressure caused Musharraf to take wide-ranging measures against various Islamist groups in Pakistan. In January 2002 he pledged to cease Pakistani support for Islamic insurgents in Kashmir and Afghanistan and declared Pakistan a "frontline state against terrorism."

Musharraf's alteration of the 1973 Constitution and introduction of the Legal Framework Order in 2002 essentially transformed Pakistan's political system from a parliamentary one to a presidential one. Amendments to the constitution entrenched the military's role by creating a military-controlled National Security Council. Musharraf's authoritarian rule eroded Pakistan's civil institutions, gover-

nance based on rule of law and on parliamentary supremacy, which in turn alienated the secular voices from Pakistan's political process. This benefitted the Islamist organizations. Post 9/11 developments in Afghanistan and Musharraf's attempt to curb Islamist extremism in Pakistan created resentment and a sense of alienation among some Islamist groups that previously received state patronage.

Despite Musharraf's secular orientation, *madrasas* continued to flourish. The government issued a Madrasa Registration Ordinance in June 2002 to control foreign funding, improve curricula (including teaching of "secular" subjects), and prohibit training in the use of arms. However, most religious groups rejected these tentative governmental reforms. Social and economic factors and Musharraf's failure to enact widespread reform contributed to the popularity of the *madrasa* system of education. Islamization continued at the provincial level as well. One such instance was the imposition of Sharia law in the North West Frontier Province. This later led to unrest and riots which caused a large portion of the population in the Swat Valley to seek refuge in other parts of the country. Despite Musharraf's policy of "enlightened moderation," Islamic laws enacted by Zia's government remained largely intact.

Elections held in October 2007 angered opposition parties as they considered it unconstitutional. Domestic unrest and widespread international protest caused Musharraf to declare a state of emergency (and de facto martial law). The proclamation of emergency rule gave Musharraf almost dictatorial powers, which led to further unrest and protests.

Benazir Bhutto's assassination in November 2007 and Musharraf's protracted withdrawal from Pakistani political life left a power vacuum which led to further violence and chaos. It is still too early to tell how permanent the Islamist reforms in Pakistan will be. However, the Islamist perspective has made more and deeper inroads in Pakistan's political sphere since its independence in 1947. In its wake it has muted other interpretations of Islam and disinherited some of Islam's rich legacy.

Backlash to Sufism

Modernist secular thinkers had been critical of Sufism, and described it as one of the sources of fatalism, passivity, and civilizational decline; its ideas and practices were criticized for making Muslim states vulnerable to foreign domination. Some Sufi groups internalized the modernist critique and were themselves critical of some traditional Sufi practices such as listening to music and visiting the tombs of saints. Other Sufi theorists rejected life in the hospice and insisted on living in the world. Yet other Sufi advocates responded to the reformist critiques with polemics

and apologetics of their own. They defended Sufi practices as authentic and even necessary according to Islamic principles. Sufi theorists asserted that science ultimately seeks what Sufism alone can offer, and in the process adopted the language of psychology and modern technology in their defense.

The rise of Wahhabism and kindred Salafi movement brought contemporary fundamentalism in its wake. The fundamentalists have attacked Sufism with a virulence sometimes even more intense than that which was reserved for anti-Western diatribes. The *ulama* perceived “popular” Islam based on the *piri-muridi* paradigm as misleading, superstitious, and vulgar, and they believed it needed to be replaced by a “purer” or true Islam based on the Koran and Sharia, and for which they were the principal spokesmen. They frequently denounced pilgrimage to Sufi tombs as idolatry, and rejected the notion that saints are able to intercede with Allah on behalf of believers. However popular Islam was the dominant religious tradition and as such it permeated Pakistani cultural life. The evolution of the state in Pakistan was profoundly affected by the predominance of popular Islam. While criticizing Sufism, it is remarkable that some fundamentalist movements adapted certain organizational techniques and leadership styles from Sufism. The main difference was that these movements substituted political ideology for Sufi spirituality, to become mass parties in the modern political arena.

Contemporary Sufism

Sufi Islam in Pakistan is represented at two levels. The first is a populist Sufism of the rural masses, associated with religious rituals and practices that include belief in the intercessory powers of saints, pilgrimage and veneration at their shrines, and a binding spiritual relationship between the *pir* and *murid*. Muslims in some rural areas of Pakistan identify themselves with some *pir*, living or dead, and seek his intercession for the solution of their problems (worldly or spiritual), and for salvation. There is belief in the powers of both the person (i.e. *pirs*) and legends about their miracles (*karamah*). Many of these *pirs* are either themselves landlords or are associated with the traditional landowning interests. Although most of the major shrines were taken over by the government in 1959 and 1961 as a part of Ayub’s modernization program, the actual management of these shrines, the organization of their religious activities, and the dispensation of spiritual favors continue under the guidance of the original *sajjadah nishins*. It is not unheard of for some of these *pir* families to use their spiritual influence to gain election to the national and provincial legislatures.

The other strain is that of scholastic or intellectual Sufism, a more recent phenomenon predominantly in urban areas and becoming increasingly popular

among the more educated population. Influenced by the writings of earlier (medieval) Sufis, and by the spiritual experiences of the masters of the Suhrawardi and Naqshbandi orders, these modern Sufis are rearticulating Islamic metaphysics as an answer to Western materialism. For them, Sufism is the heart of Islam, and Islamic revival begins with the spiritual reawakening of individual Muslims.

Despite the vicissitudes of foreign invasion, the collapse of traditional social structures, the imposition of European education and culture, the rise of the secular nation-state, and an ideological shift towards fundamentalism in the Muslim world, Sufism in many different local forms persists and survives across the entire population spectrum from the illiterate to the elite. In Pakistan Sufism has now become a position to be defended or criticized in terms of ideological constructions of Islam. Whether defended in traditional languages as part of classical Muslim culture or attacked as non-Muslim heresy, Sufism still forms part of the symbolic capital of not only Pakistan but also of the majority of Muslim countries. As a form of religious practice, Sufism is seen both as an eclectic form of New Age spirituality and as the mystical essence of Islam.

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Education, Religion And The Creation Of Subject: Different Educational Systems Of Pakistan

By Muhammad A. Nisar

“The forms and the specific situations of the government of men by one another in a given society are multiple; they are superimposed, they cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another.”

Foucault

“The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life.”

Plato

“We must...do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”

Macaulay, Architect of education system of British India

“Through its textbooks, school teachers, universities, newspapers, novels and magazines, the colonial order was able to penetrate and colonize local discourse.”

Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*¹

The educational system has a unique place in modern nation state. Foucault calls it “the instrument whereby every individual, in a society..., can gain access to any kind of discourse.”² Most of the possibilities to progress and prosper are available only through educational systems in the world today. Refusing entry into the educational system is synonymous with refusing entry into the main stream culture and work ethic of a country. All this has placed extraordinary power in the hands of those who design what an educational system looks like and how it defines right and wrong.

Educational institutions are instrumental in shaping how we view the world. Each educational system teaches an entire generation the difference between what is right and what is wrong. That is why Foucault calls educational systems as constituting “doctrinal groups”.³ Naturally, who defines this right and wrong and what

these definitions imply for a society are of utmost importance in modern nation state.

Most of modern nation states have a single educational system for all citizens. It ensures that the definitions of right and wrong, the ethnocentric ideals,⁴ and the worldview of all citizens are identical. A single educational system, thus, creates a unity of thought and outlook within a society. Pakistan with its different educational systems is an exception to this rule. While there are certain notable exceptions like the United States where multiple education systems are in vogue, other determinants of popular culture like media and politics ensure creation of a single “national culture”.

There are three different educational systems in Pakistan; State education system,⁵ elite private schools and Madrassahs (religious schools). State education system is the largest and most of the student population is enrolled in these schools. Elite private schools and Madrassahs have comparatively smaller student populations. However, these two systems have great sociological significance because students from the Elite schools have a disproportionately high representation in bureaucracy, businesses, and state offices (Rahman T, 2005). Similarly, the students from Madrassahs have constituted a significant portion of the sectarian violence in Pakistan (Rahman, 2003).

This paper argues following main points about educational systems of Pakistan. Firstly, the three educational systems represent products of totally different historical evolutionary processes and have divergent ideologies about education. Secondly, these systems because of differences in curriculum, pedagogical style, and discipline techniques create distinct concepts of “citizenship” among their students. Owing to this difference, students which pass through these systems do not share the same worldview and form different types of “subjects”. Thirdly, I argue that most of the problems of radical Islam which Pakistan has been experiencing in recent past are because of these different educational systems.

It is not intended to discount the importance of other socio-political factors like neglect of frontier regions by the government and the US-Pakistan politics in Afghanistan during the Cold War. However, I argue that the difference in outlook towards life in various strata of Pakistan induced by education systems of Pakistan create a fertile ground where other socio-political factors can sow the seeds of discontent and unrest.

Historical Evolution of Educational Systems:

Religious Madrassahs:

Religious Madrassahs (places of study) emerged as centers of organized learning in early Islamic history during ninth and tenth centuries Arabia. These Madrassahs were a new innovation because there was no tradition of organized learning in Arab before the emergence of these institutions. They were designed to satisfy the need for organized teaching of newly emerging fields of knowledge like Hadith,⁶ Tafsir,⁷ Kalaam⁸ and logic. Owing to their attraction of the best minds of their time, very soon they surpassed all forms of private learning. The rigid classification of knowledge based on religious law and dogma inevitably made jurists and traditionalists final authorities in religious and worldly matters.

Within a few decades, Madrassahs became the only legitimized source of Islamic knowledge. There are a variety of reasons for this rapid increase in importance of these institutions. One of the major reasons was the relationship with the state. Madrassahs were mostly state funded and the Kings looked to the Imams in major Madrassahs to legitimize their actions.⁹ In return, Imams were given a relatively free reign in religious matters not concerning the state (Fazlur Rahman 1982). This State-Madrassah relationship also had the added benefit of ostracizing any radical religious sentiments against the Kings.

These Madrassahs in the first few centuries of Islamic rule provided the state with most of its bureaucracy and state functionaries. In addition, they served as learning centers for most of the prominent Islamic scholars during the medieval ages. For centuries, these Madrassahs had virtual power over the definition of right and wrong in the Islamic world. For example, fields of study like philosophy and astronomy were not taught at the Madrassahs and were labeled “un-Islamic”. These fields had to be studied privately and socially they had a status much inferior to fields such as logic, tafsir, and medicine.

When India was colonized during the nineteenth century by the British, rules of the game changed. The British brought their own educational system. Entry into all major state and bureaucratic jobs was dependant on passing through this new educational system. In addition, the British withdrew all state funding to the Madrassahs. So, the Madrassahs not only suffered a financial crisis but also a social crisis (Zaman 1999). Passing through a Madrassah was no longer a guarantee to any job because graduates from Madrassahs, though fluent in traditional languages like Persian and Arabic, were unfamiliar with language of the Colonialists (English).

All this created a fundamental change in the educational goals of the Madrassahs. They resisted change and refused to adopt modern curriculum or teaching of English. The learning objectives changed from training bureaucrats and state officers to defending the faith against foreign invaders (Talbani 1996). Owing to this static stance, Madrassahs continued to teach their curriculum which was unchanged since the middle ages. As a result, graduation from these Madrassahs stopped having any value in society and the job market. Students of these Madrassahs could only become teachers in other Madrassahs or Imams in local mosques.

All this insulated the Madrassahs and their students from all that modernity and the industrial age stood for. Everything which was associated with the West came to be recognized as evil and hence, worthy to be despised and rejected.

*Public Schools and State Education System:*¹⁰

State-run education system was introduced by the British in India. A lot has been written on the educational philosophy behind the educational system of British India. Nothing explains it better than the following quotes from the architect of this education system,

. . . the effect of training . . . is to give an entirely new turn to the native mind. The young men educated in this way cease to strive after independence according to the original Native model, and aim at, improving the institutions of the country according to the English model, with the ultimate result of establishing constitutional self-government. They cease to regard us as enemies and usurpers, and they look upon us as friends and patrons, and powerful beneficent persons, under whose protection the regeneration of their country will gradually be worked out. . . .¹¹

This system was, therefore, designed to establish the hegemony of the British over the colonized people.¹² After its independence in 1947, Pakistan maintained the basic educational philosophy of the British. It was especially true for the discipline and control methods of the British colonial education system, before independence the British used the state education system to establish hegemony over the locals, after independence it was the religious and political interest groups who managed to exploit the state education system to establish hegemony of certain ideas in society.

A new educational policy was developed with each political transition in Pakistan. Each new educational policy publically aimed to prepare 'good citizens' but instead, reproduced the government's ideology and its conception of citizen-

ship and citizenship education (Althusser 1972). For example, during the socialist regime of Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, the school curriculum was revised to preach “socialist” values and “all privately-managed schools and colleges” were nationalized in line with socialist ideals (Ministry of Education, 1972, pp. 6, 35). The new educational policy of 1979 under Gen. Zia ul Haq who replaced Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, revised the curricula so that “Islamic ideology permeates the thinking of the younger generation,” and society is refashioned according to Islamic tenets (Ministry of Education, 1979, p.2).

The state schools, therefore, continue to indoctrinate the students with the political ideology of the state. The discipline and control methods ensure that the graduating students do not resist the dominant political culture of their society.

*Elite Private Schools and British Education System:*¹³

Elite private schools are also a product of British rule. Initially, two kinds of elitist schools in India were formed: those for the hereditary aristocracy, called the chiefs’ colleges; and those for the newly emerging professional classes, called European or English schools, including armed forces schools which taught all subjects in English. Both kinds of institutions served political and social purposes because the chiefs’ colleges were meant to Anglicise young rulers, to encourage loyalty to the crown, and preclude events like those of 1857 (Mangan in Rahman 2005).

The parallel system of elitist schooling did not change because of the establishment of Pakistan. Indeed, as the military and the higher bureaucracy both came from this elite background, these schools multiplied in Pakistan as the professional middle-class started expanding in 1960s. Thus it is no surprise that the government, dominated by members of these two elitist groups, came up with policies that supported these Elite schools.

These schools suffered a temporary setback during the 1970s when the socialist regime of Mr. Z.A. Bhutto nationalized all private schools. However, immediately after his government fell, these schools were de-nationalized. 1980s saw a huge increase in the popularity of these schools. Huge profit margins attracted a large number of investors.

Many new schools were built to make profit and cater to the demands of elite sections of society for “better” education. These schools have remained almost an exclusively urban phenomenon which also indicates the elitist character and focus of these schools.

Over the years, these schools have come to represent best possible opportunities to personal growth in Pakistan. Most of the students of these schools either

enter foreign universities after graduation or receive admission into one of the elite domestic higher education institutions.

Discipline and creation of the “compliant” subject:

Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish* has pointed to the importance of control over the physical body of the subjects for creation of discipline by the state starting in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ He also points to the fact that schools like the military and prison were institutions where this disciplining of the body was carried out (Foucault 1977). This concern for physical discipline is visible in the education system of Pakistan.

The teaching methodology in almost all of the public schools and most of the private schools which follow the government curriculum is surprisingly identical. All these schools idealize discipline; strong emphasis is put on routine, following orders, and completing the assigned tasks in time. Physical punishment is not uncommon especially in boys schools.

Learning mostly involves cramming and copying what has been taught. Until the High School level, students are encouraged not to question what is written in the text books and what is taught to them. Students are supposed to memorize the books, mostly without realizing what they are memorizing. Most of the assigned homework involves copying from the text books instead of analytical assignments. The curriculum of these schools is set by the government. Teaching of Islamic studies is compulsory at all grades of school. However, it is the social studies curriculum which is the most ideologically indoctrinated. Both the social studies and Islamic studies books have articles on themes like Pan-Islamism, Islamic identity of Pakistan, Muslim world, revolutionary movements in Islam, history of Western colonization and the idealization of the concept of Jihad (Ahmad 2004).

Interestingly, as with the Madrassahs, no part of curriculum presents perspective of followers of other religions or of citizens of the rest of the world. The only topic which deals with Non-Muslims is the status of minorities in an Islamic state and that is also in a very superficial and non-analytical way. The curriculum does not differentiate between a “good citizen” and a “pious Muslim”.

There are hardly any analytical discussions outside of the assigned curriculum in classes and raising questions is not appreciated especially in social sciences. Similarly, examinations are almost exclusively written so that instead of analytical skills or academic grasp of educational concepts, memory, and cramming skills of students are tested. Students who are able to identically copy what was taught to them generally receive the highest marks.

A combination of strict physical and mental discipline permeates these schools. We see here the clear continuation of the controlling techniques which Mitchell captured in his insightful study of colonial educational system,

‘A student is not permitted to change his place in any of the classrooms without permission; this order is to be followed in all classes.’ There is a meticulous concern for the discipline of rank and place. It is not the particular place that matters - desks can be assigned by drawing lots - but the act of positioning and remaining in place. Punishment is a more overt expression of this concern with order... (Students) are now deprived of leave or confined to their rooms rather than beaten with the leather whip. In this way punishment is made an aspect of discipline, of that continuous technique of control whose method is to position, to divide, and to set limits.¹⁵

Students who pass out of these schools have a world view which idealizes following authority without questioning.¹⁶ Thus students are physically and mentally trained to become conformists, a practice which is the legacy of British colonial experience. However, what is new is the idealization of an Islamic society and Islamic state which is inculcated into the minds of these students. Most of these students come to view Pakistan as an Islamic Khilafa where all the laws should be in conformity with Islam. Any social or legal change which is deemed socially un-Islamic is thus deemed to be a grave mistake by this group of students.

***Taqlid¹⁷ and creation of the “follower” subject:**

The main objective of Madrassahs continues to be the production of religious scholars trained to defend religion and protect traditional values (Talbani 96). Therefore, curriculum is heavily focused towards Islamic theological subjects like Quran, Hadith, Fiqh,¹⁸ etc. Although many Madrassahs have started teaching English as a subject, sciences or English language are hardly ever the focus of study in these institutions. Islamic subjects have essentially remained unchanged in curriculum since the middle ages.

All Madrassahs, including the ones belonging to the Shia sect, teach the Dars-i-Nizami though they do not use the same texts. Dars-i-Nizami was designed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has remained mostly unchanged. All Madrassahs also teach their particular point of view (Madhab or Maslak) which clarifies and rationalizes the beliefs of their sect (Sunni or Shia) and sub-sect (Tal-bani 1996). Moreover, they train their students to refute¹⁹ “heretical” beliefs and Western ideas. The world view of these students remains limited to only their own

sect. For them all the “truth” is present in the belief system of their own sect, all the “others” are blinded by the “false” beliefs.

Pedagogy is based on rote memorization, which is considered the way to achieve maximum benefit from learning and obedience to authority. Raising questions is hardly ever encouraged. It is especially true of Islamic subjects. The doctrine of Taqlid is taught with faithful diligence. This doctrine implies that Islamic law and practices of the early centuries of Islam are ideal, unchangeable and final; thus they should be followed as they are without raising new questions. Imitation of teachers is regarded as a virtue because they are supposed to be the role models of Islamic way of life.

No part of the curriculum presents perspectives of the followers of other religions or of citizens of the rest of the world. The only topic which deals with rights of the Non-Muslims is the status of minorities in an Islamic state. Even this topic is taught with its medieval interpretation which implies that all Non-Muslims in an Islamic state must pay an additional tax called Jazya to enjoy protection of law.

Strict discipline is inculcated among students and any deviation from the rules is punished by physical punishment. Sometimes physical punishment involves severe thrashing at the hands of the teachers. Raising a voice which questions any taught subject is unimaginable in such an environment. Discipline and punishment in these schools is much harsher than the state education system.

The stagnant curriculum, physical punishments, and a teaching philosophy which refutes all other religious and cultural points of view ensure the creation of a subject who blindly follows the brand of religion taught to him. His mind is totally closed to the possibility that there is any truth outside his particular sect. He idealizes the Islamic system preached by his own sect and is taught the virtue of sacrificing his life for the establishment of this system.

Pedagogy and creation of the “liberal” subject:

The elite private schools have a totally different educational philosophy than the state education system and the Madrassahs. They do not follow the curriculum, teaching methodology, or examination method of the state. Instead, all of these schools are affiliated with the Cambridge Education System of England and follow its approved curriculum.

The curriculum of these schools teaches entirely different values than the ones taught at Madrassahs or the state run education system. Religion does not play a significant part in the curriculum of these schools. Here curriculum focuses on inculcating into students virtues of a secular, capitalist nation state. That is why most students tend to have a secular liberal outlook towards life.

The teaching methodology is also different as compared to state schools and Madrassahs. Physical punishment is uncommon and asking questions is encouraged. The examinations in these schools follow University of Cambridge guidelines. The focus is not on memorizing the facts. Instead examination questions require analysis and intelligent interpretation of curriculum. All this translates into an analytical and open frame of mind.

More important than curriculum, however, is the social life within these schools. All of these schools are co-ed. In addition, all the teaching and conversation among students takes place exclusively in English. These students, therefore, develop a lifestyle and point of view which has nothing in common with the social norms and values of their society. That is why, generally, the students who graduate from these schools tend to have a social circle limited to graduates of similar schools.

The conflict of educational ideologies:

Education, according to Foucault, in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, follows the well-trodden battle lines of social conflict. In his opinion, “every educational system is a means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it” (Foucault 1971). Thus, the different educational systems of Pakistan act as indoctrinating grounds for different social groups and serve as the breeding grounds for future social conflict.

Each educational system has its own conception of an “ideal” subject. The strict discipline and literalism of the Madrassahs ensures total submission by the students. The Madrassahs, therefore, serve as the ideal recruiting grounds to create blind followers of a particular brand of religion. Similarly, the state education system acts to create individuals who are passive and compliant to state policies. Elite private schools on the other hand create subjects who share capitalist values but have no roots in their own culture.

All these subjects have very different conceptions of what an ideal society should look like. A Madrassah student is trained to think that an Islamic state is the rightful destiny of Pakistan. His first affiliation is to his religion. He is trained to think that there is no concept of a nation state in Islam. A student of an Elite school on the other hand seldom bothers with this question.²⁰ He is in awe of the Western culture and its values. For him modernity means, everything which is Western. There is no common ground when it comes to social ideals between a student of a Madrassah and a student of Elite school. They are residents of different planets.

The students of State education system are the most “confused”. On the one hand, the curriculum teaches them that Pakistan was made in the name of Islam. On the other, the discipline and routine method in the schools trains them to be compliant to state policies. Various studies have shown that a majority of these students idealize an Islamic system in Pakistan.²¹ However, they are trained not to do anything about it unless the state decides to do so. This difference between “ideal” and “reality” creates social cognitive dissonance.

One of the major reasons Taliban have been so successful in the North-West is because they have come forward with the claim to install the Islamic system which the state has not been able to create in 60 years. In this way they have been able to address this cognitive dissonance created by the state education system. It is especially true for the Pathans of the tribal areas.²²

The effects of this compliance can be seen in the political and social landscape of Pakistan. It is no wonder that Pakistan has been ruled by military dictators during most of its history. These dictators largely faced very little popular resistance against their rule. Similarly, a culture of public protest for social rights has failed to develop. In my opinion, a lot of it has to do with the passivity and compliance created by the state education system.

Rahman has shown that the attitude towards religious tolerance and pluralism is very different among the students of the different educational systems of Pakistan. His results showed that whereas 65.5% of surveyed students in elite private schools were in favor of giving equal rights to Ahmadis,²³ this percentage was 46% in State school and only 12.6% among Madrassah students²⁴ (Rahman 2004). These results clearly show that Madrassah students are extremely intolerant regarding equal rights for all religious minorities.

The most surprising aspect of this study was that it revealed that the school teachers were significantly more intolerant than their students on questions of religious equality. The study showed that only 43% teachers were in favor of giving equal rights to Ahmadis (compared to 65% of students). Similarly, in State schools only 27% were tolerant of equal rights (compared to 46% students). The most striking results were from the Madrassahs where only 3.7% of teachers said that Ahmadis deserved equal rights (Rahman 2004).

The results of this study lead us to two important sociological findings; First of all, a lot of religious intolerance in Pakistan is because of the training which students receive at schools. Secondly, and more significantly, the study shows the importance of school curriculum on social attitudes. Almost all the teachers in the schools belong to the age group which grew up in 1970s and 1980s when the state education policy was revised to “Islamize” the population. The effects of this policy are proving detrimental to the society now.

Recently it has been argued that these Madrassahs and their curriculum are not very important in the emergence of radical brand of Islam in Pakistan; therefore, there is no need to reform them. The major rationale provided to justify this explanation is that only 1.5 Million students²⁵ are currently enrolled in these Madrassahs. It has been argued that this subgroup forms a very small number as far as the total number of total student population of Pakistan so this subgroup cannot be responsible for the deterioration in law and order situation (Khawaja et al 2003, 2004, 2005).

However, in my opinion, this argument is incorrect because even if only one third of the student population of the Madrassahs became radicalized and raise arms against the state, they will form a force of greater strength than the Taliban.²⁶ It is especially true of the North-West where the rugged mountain terrain makes guerrilla style warfare ideal for small groups like Taliban. In addition, statistics prove that the enrollment in these Madrassahs is comparatively more in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan where the Taliban have been created (Khawaja et al 2004). All of this, points to the importance of Madrassah reform in Pakistan.

These educational systems, however, co-existed peacefully till the 1980s when the state decided to glorify the concept of Jihad. The motives for this policy were purely political because Pakistan had decided to cooperate with U.S.A. to coordinate aid and military equipment to the Afghans in fighting against the Russians. Owing to various state policies and changes in academic curriculum, Jihad and armed resistance to fight for an Islamic state became a part of popular discourse during these years (Talbani 1996, Zia 2003, Ahmad 1999).

This new discourse was especially encouraged and facilitated by the state in the Madrassahs of the North-West Frontier Province. The reason for this was simple. These Madrassahs were used to recruit and train new “Jihadis” for the fight against the Russians in Afghanistan. State also provided them with weapons to fight in Afghanistan. Although after the fight was over, state stopped using the Madrassahs as training grounds, in many areas of Pak-Afghan border this practice continued (Abbas 2002, Rana 2004). The major reason was the continued fighting in Afghanistan between various factions of militants. From these Madrassahs, the Taliban was formed which today controls parts of the North-West Frontier Province.

I argue that these different education systems imply that there are different “governments” for different social groups in Pakistan. I use the word “government” here in the sense which, according to Foucault, is the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups is directed by dominant social groups. It includes “modes of action more or less considered or calculated which are destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people” (Foucault 1982).

For a modern nation state to become more cohesive and stronger, power has to become progressively “governmentalized.”²⁷ However, the control of different social groups over creation of the “subject” means that this trend is reversing in Pakistan and power relations are increasingly getting away from the state and into the hands of other “potential states.”²⁸ If this trend is not stopped, it will prove fatal for the state of Pakistan in the long-run.

Conclusion:

Pedagogical philosophy of educational systems is instrumental in the creation of modern subject. Modern nation states, therefore, tend to have an educational system (or at least a curriculum) which preaches an ideology that is cohesive and facilitates the creation of the “subject” which the state desires. The three educational systems of Pakistan, on the other hand, create very different types of subjects who have completely different worldviews.

At present, the state is ruled by the subjects taught at the Elitist private schools. However, socio-political developments in the last decade have created circumstances which have facilitated the “Muqqalid”²⁹ subjects created by the Madrassahs to take up arms against the other two groups. They have been able to gain more power by tapping into the cognitive dissonance of the “compliant” subjects created by the State education system, especially in the North-West.

All the developments indicate that if the state does not reverse its policy of letting the three different educational systems from continuing, the unity of the state will be in greater jeopardy in the days to come.

Notes:

¹ Mitchell Timothy, *Colonizing Egypt*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p 169-170

² Foucault Michel, Orders of Discourse, *Social Science Information*, Apr 1971; vol. 10: pp. 7-30

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ I have included all Public Schools and the low fee private schools in this category because all these have the same curriculum designed by the state. These schools also have similar teaching methodology, and discipline techniques. Therefore, the

students graduating from these schools come to have the same world view.

⁶ The knowledge of sayings of Prophet Muhammad

⁷ The knowledge of exegesis of Quran

⁸ Knowledge of reasoning and arguing which was very important for development of Muslim law during initial centuries of Islamic era

⁹ Fazlur Rahman also discusses how the relationship between religious scholars and the Kings was responsible for the development of the doctrine of “Irja” which has been responsible for passivity among the Sunni sect of Islam

¹⁰ This category includes all Public Schools and most of the private schools other than the ones which fall under the category of Elite Schools.

¹¹ This speech by Thomas Babington Macaulay to the Committee of Public Instruction which was entrusted with the task of designing an educational system for British India was given in 1835. It is considered to represent the philosophy behind the educational system of British India and has been widely used to represent Colonial Education systems by many authors like Timothy Mitchell. For more details see Bureau of Education. Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839). Edited by H. Sharp. Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920. Reprint. Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965, 107-117.

¹² Here I am using the Gramscian concept of hegemony as it is exercised through the institutions of civil society, the ensemble of educational, religious and associational institutions. According to Gwyn Williams’ introductory definition, hegemony means ‘an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society, in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all tastes, morality, customs, religions and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations’ (Femia 1975)

¹³ This category of private schools are labeled “elite” because the exorbitant fee structure and the distribution of these schools in large metropolitan areas ensures that only students belonging to a particular socio-economic class get entry in them.

¹⁴ For further details see Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish*, New York : Pantheon Books, 1977

¹⁵ For details on this see Mitchell Timothy (1988). *Colonising Egypt*-. Berkeley: University of California Press

¹⁶ It is also because of the doctrine of Irja (passive following of the rulers) which is taught in Islamic studies curriculum

¹⁷ Taqlid refers to the popular Islamic doctrine which implies that the four schools of Islamic Law should be followed literally without changes according to time

¹⁸ Knowledge of traditional Islamic Law

¹⁹ It is taught in the subject known as “*Radd*” which deals with the rationale and logic to negate and refute the points of view which are considered heretical according to the scholars of that particular sect

²⁰ There is some evidence to indicate that since 9/11, even in this group of students the question of the relationship between religion and state is getting more attention

²¹ I also conducted a small random survey (87 students) for this purpose. The results showed that 62% of students wanted Islam to have a role in Public sphere of Pakistan. The survey is a part of an ongoing research project and is currently unpublished

²² According to Olivier Roy, an expert on Taliban, the constitution of Pakistan promises an Islamic state which has not been created in 63 years. This has given organizations like Taliban an opportunity to legitimize their struggle. They claim that the state is hypocrite because it has not established an Islamic state while they are working towards the realization of this dream.

²³ Ahmadis are a sect which according to majority of Muslims is considered non-Muslim because of its belief system. State of Pakistan in the constitution of 1973 declared the Ahmadi sect as un-Islamic.

²⁴ The percentage of students who were in favor of giving equal rights to Hindus was 78%, 47% and 17% in Elite schools, state schools and Madrassahs respectively. Similarly, for Christians 83%, 65% and 18% of students were in favor of equal rights in Elite Schools, State schools and Madrassahs respectively.

²⁵ There is some difference of opinion on the exact number. However, most of the studies put it between 1.3 -1.7 Million students. See for example, Andrabi et al (2006). Religious school enrollment in Pakistan: A look at the data. *Comparative Education Review*, 50(3), 446.

²⁶ Taliban have been successful as small groups. For example, only 100 fighters of Taliban were able to conquer Buner which is a small city south of Swat in North West Pakistan.

²⁷ Foucault, Michel, (1982), the subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, , 777

²⁸ According to Theda Skocpol, there are two main conditions of a sudden social change in a country; absence of law and order, and presence of “potential states” (Skocpol 1979). The different educational systems, in my opinion, have fulfilled the second requirement by creating Taliban

²⁹ A person who follows the doctrine of Taqlid i.e. blindly follows the religious doctrine he is born into. Reference here to the subject created by the Madrassahs.

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English Education in India: Hindu Anamnesis versus Muslim Torpor

By R. K. Kochhar

English education was introduced by the British with the twin purpose of impressing upon the natives the value of western thought and of preparing them for taking up jobs to assist in the administration of the country. The first protégés were Hindus and there developed a Hindu middle class which began to demand concessions from the government without offering subservience in return. The British then began to encourage the Muslims to adopt English education in order to develop a counterpoise to Hindu middle class assertiveness. But among both communities English education was strictly an upper class affair in which the lower castes had no role.

A five star hotel built at Bangalore after four decades of independence, named Windsor Manor, has a tourist shop that has been given the name East India Company. For the class of people that goes to luxury hotels, East India Company does not connote economic drain and social strain. Instead it is a rather cute name that smells of mulligatawny, bungalow and 'koi hai'!

The British rule over India was quite unlike any other that India had seen. Earlier invaders who came or short visits could lay their hands only on the accumulated wealth of a part of the country. The British had access to the whole country and were in no hurry. Earlier rulers even when they came from outside made India their home and spent all their revenue collection within the country. The British rulers in contrast had no stake in the well being and prosperity of their subjects. When the colonization of India began, England was already on the verge of industrial revolution. India now provided the capital as well as the market for the new inventions. In the process, the agricultural classes were impoverished and the traditional manufacturing base destroyed, resulting in permanent annihilation of the artisan classes

Economic drain was accompanied by social strain. In the past the struggle for the throne was settled by the contenders among themselves by using short and effective methods like assassination and warfare. The common man was irrelevant

in the power game and was left alone. But now that the rulers were foreigners who wanted to remain that way, the rules of the game changed.

Apart from taking care of the outgoing rulers, the British had to take the people also into account. It was thus essential to acquire legitimacy and to build a constituency among people even if they were perceived as racially inferior. The British, having already dealt with Indians for 150 years, knew the importance of legitimacy. Accordingly Robert Clive, the hero of Plassey who was made a baron by his own king and an honorary doctor of literature by the Oxford University, extracted from the Mughal emperor the rather ironic title of Sabat Jung, proven in war! In the same spirit, the company got an official status in 1765 by its appointment as diwan of Bengal. In 1818 the nawab of Oudh was persuaded to disown Delhi and declare himself the king. And finally in 1857 the Mughal dynasty whose empire had already vanished was physically brought to an end. The old emperor was exiled and all male descendants of the family were killed to bring the once famed Mughal bloodline to an end. The exercise in succeeding to the Mughal empire was completed by shifting the imperial capital from Calcutta to New Delhi, even if more years were spent building it than ruling from it. (Ironically, the British desire to capture Khyber Pass, the land gate of India, could never be fulfilled.)

The British attempts at political legitimacy in India were no substitute to building a support base among the people. Towards this end, the British very carefully studied the complexity of Indian social structure, formalized its various inherent contradictions by theorizing, and gave them a permanence by putting them in writing, all the time conscientiously accentuating them with a view to entrenching themselves in a setting they did not belong to. Indians had never bothered about their sociology before. But now their leading classes, seeking new equations with the new rulers, dutifully read what was written about them and decided to live up to it by thinking and acting the way the British analysts said they did! The pre-British India can be compared to a chemical solution in which positive and negative solution in which positive and negative ions intermingled and coexisted unselfconsciously. The British rule was like passing a strong current which brought about decomposition and permanent polarization.

The population profile of India, derived from the 1881 census is given in Table 1. Muslims numbered 34 million, or about 24 per cent of the total population. As expected they are non-uniformly distributed. It is noteworthy that a majority of Indian Muslims are non-Urdu speaking.

| | Total Population | Muslims (Millions) | Muslims/total X 100 | Muslim in Prov/Muslim in India x 100 |
|------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| India | 190 | 45 | 23.7 | 100 |
| Punjab | 18 | 11 | 60 | 23 |
| NWP + Oudh | 44 | 6 | 13 | 13 |
| Bengal | 67 | 22 | 32 | 48 |
| Assam | 4.4 | 1.3 | 31 | 3 |
| CP | 7.6 | 0.3 | 3.6 | 0.6 |
| Madras | 30 | 2 | 6.3 | 4.4 |
| Bombay | 15 | 3 | 20 | 6.7 |

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF MUSLIM POPULATION IN INDIA, 1881

Hindu Anamnesis

The British conquest of, and rule over, India would not have been possible without the harnessing of the natives. We may straight away distinguish between two phases in the use of the natives, which we may call the ‘moonshee’ phase and the ‘baboo’ phase, advisedly using the old spellings to underline the intended meaning [4]. In the moonshee phase, the natives were employed as informers and non-English knowing petty officials to acquaint the new rulers with the lay of the land and with its customs and laws. The term moonshee was used by the British for Muslim harkaras; Hindu harkaras irrespective of their caste were called pandits. It is appropriate to name this phase after moonshee, because the Muslims generally kept away from the next, better known, baboo phase in which the natives were given English education and hired as administrative assistants.

The British rule meant different things to Hindus and Muslims. The British had their memories of the historical crusades against Muslims and were self-conscious about dethroning them in India. In the same spirit, to the Muslims the British symbolized Muslim defeat and humiliation. Accordingly they went into a sulk (that lasted 100 years). The Hindus felt relieved for the same reason. To them, the new rulers meant their own dekafrisation. The Hindus therefore made a beeline for the new jobs and the new opportunities.

Within 10 years the Muslim leaders were complaining of their being left out. Accordingly a ‘Muhammadan madrasa’ was opened at Calcutta in 1781 and endowed with lands that brought it an annual income of Rs. 29,000 [2, p 18]. Its aim was “to qualify the sons of Muhammadan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the state, even at that largely monopolized by the Hindus” [3, p 7].

The madrasa was the first British-sponsored educational institution in India. This is ironical in view of the fact that it remained a dead end. Muslims kept away from later developments on the educational front, while the Hindus moved from strength to strength.

By the Regulating Act of 1773, the East India Company's administration was placed under the British parliamentary control, and the following year a Supreme Court of justice was established at Calcutta. This was a revolutionary concept for the Indians. It was the first time that an objective, formal legal framework became available, which did not depend on the personality of the ruler or on divine mumbo-jumbo. Legal training gave Indians the courage to look the empire in the eye. Indeed inherent in the British rule was the slow preparation of the Indians to eventually overthrow that rule. Legal profession provided valuable leadership, and the Indian fascination for law and legal rigmarole has outlasted British rule.

The off-shoot of the introduction of the judiciary was even more momentous. It led to the revival of Sanskrit. It was essential for company law officers to acquaint themselves with the customary laws of Hindus and Muslims. Accordingly nine pandits were hired to compile a digest of Hindu law [5], but nobody could be found to translate it directly from Sanskrit into English. A Sanskrit-knowing Muslim first translated it into Persian, from where an English translation was prepared and published in 1776. This brought home the point that Sanskrit, though a dead language, was of importance. This also brought William Jones to Calcutta. Jones was a well-respected oriental scholar who was already a Fellow of the Royal Society of London and an unsuccessful candidate for Arabic professorship at Oxford. In 1784, Jones founded the Asiatic Society, which institutionalized studies into India's past.

A step in the same direction was the establishment in 1791 of a Sanskrit College at Benaras. Its aim was spelt out by the resident at Benaras in a letter to the governor general on January 1, 1792 "the preservation and cultivation of the laws, literature and religion of that nation, at this centre of their faith, and the common resort of all their tribes". Note the use of 'nation' and 'tribes' in relation to the Hindus. Interestingly, a memoir originally compiled in 1827 from the records at the East India House by Thomas Fischer, searcher of the records, simplifies the above quotation to "the preservation and cultivation of the laws, literature and religion of the Hindus" and still places it in quotes as if it were the original [3, p. 186]. Like the madrasa, this college was to train and supply native law officials, but this advantage was secondary. The first advantage as listed was "to the British name and nation in its tendency towards endearing our government to the native Hindoos..." [3, p. 10]

So far, matters pertaining to learning had been dealt with locally. In 1813 the company acquired an education policy, which was immediately geared towards

the ‘Asiatic Society’ end. Since this aspect of the policy does not seem to have received much attention, it may be worthwhile to discuss it in some detail.

India was a nice country for the British to own, but its inhabitants could not be wished away. Every 20 years when the company charter came up for renewal, there was a discussion on the question of native education. In 1792, the question was summarily shot down with one of the company directors stating bluntly, “we had just lost America from our folly, in having allowed the establishment of schools and colleges, and that it would not do for us to repeat the same act of folly in regard to India”. And adding that “if the Natives required anything in the way of education, they must come to England for it” [2,p 2].

The argument was still valid 20 years later, but the British parliament, as befit its station, took an exalted view. It however, had no intention of treading on the company’s toes. Very cleverly, it pronounced its policy in such broad terms as to make it completely meaningless. The company was ordered to spend one lakh rupees (or more) on education every year. The sum was by no means large; it accounted for one part in 17,000 of the company’s credit, it spent double the amount during 1813-30). Where the money was to be spent was also spelt out by the parliament:

- i) on “the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India”, and
- ii) on “the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India”.

This is what the parliament said [2,p 22]. What the company thought of it is contained in the follow-up dispatch sent by the court of directors to governor-general on June 3, 1814. The dispatch makes no mention of science nor of any encouragement to natives, learned or not. This is not surprising. The trading company had no interest in science. Its hold over India was still not complete, nor was it sure that the natives were reconciled to its rule.

The company therefore decided to reach out to ‘the learned Hindus’. The dispatch noted:

“In a political point of view, considerable advantage might... be made to flow from the measure proposed, if it should be conducted with due attention to the usage and habits of the Natives. They are known to attach a notion of sanctity to the soil, the buildings, and other objects of devout resort, and particularly to that at Benaras, which is regarded as the central point of their religious worship, and as the great repository of their learning. The possession of this venerated city, to which every class and rank of the Hindoos is occasionally attracted, has placed in the

hands of the British government a powerful instrument of connexion and reconciliation, especially with the Mahrattas, who are more strongly attached than any other to the supposed sanctity of Benaras.” The court of directors therefore wanted to know “what ancient establishments are still existing for the diffusion of knowledge in that city” and “in what way their present establishments might be improved to most advantage”.

Significantly, the company was asked to identify “those natives....through whose instrumentality the liberal intentions of the legislature might most advantageously be advanced”.

Some material benefit was no doubt expected from this exploration of India’s past. Ancient tracts on plants and drugs and on their medicinal use might prove desirable to the European practitioners. But main benefit was strategic. A study of the pre-Islamic past will please the Hindus. As the dispatch noted, “there are treatises on Astronomy and Mathematics, including Geometry and Algebra, which though they may not add new lights to European science, might be made to form links of communication between the natives and the gentlemen in our service, who are attached to the Observatory¹ and to the department of engineers...”

The court of directors therefore directed [3, p. 23; 4p 23] that “due encouragement should be given to such of our servants . . . as may be disposed to apply themselves to the Sanskrit language, and we desire that the teachers may be selected from amongst the Natives . . . and that their recompense should be liberal”. Finally the directors noted [3, p. 23, 4 p23] that “we shall consider the money... beneficially employed, if it should prove the means, by an improved intercourse of the Europeans with the Natives, to produce those reciprocal feelings of regard and respect which are essential to the permanent interests of the British empire in India”

| Province | Per Cent of Muslims in Population | Per Cent of Muslims at School |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Punjab | 51.6 | 34.9 |
| NWP | 13.5 | 17.8 |
| Oudh | 9.9 | 24.8 |
| Bengal + Assam | 32.3 | 14.4 |
| Madras | 6 | 4.4 |
| Bombay | 15.4 | 8.2 |
| (Sindh) | (80) | (31.8) |

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIMS AT RECOGNISED SCHOOLS. 1871-72

Notes: Including Bihar and Orissa, and including Sindh. Source: See 3, p 148.

Note that native here means Hindu. The company's policy of cultivating the Hindus paid rich dividends. Even though the Asiatic Society did not admit Indians till 1829 and the first Indian president (Rajendra Lal Mitra) did not take office till 1885, researches into Indian antiquity had profound impact. Emphasising joint Indo-European origins, the British rulers successfully projected themselves as patrons of India's ancient culture, as if the Muslim rule was an aberration, and the British rule a continuation of the Hindu golden age. (A century later when Harappan civilization was excavated amidst rising Indian nationalism and Hitler's Aryanism in Europe, a theory was propounded that the native Indian civilization was destroyed by Aryan invasion, even though there was not evidence to suggest it.)

The Hindus felt galvanized. Vedic studies were liberated from the constraints of priestly families and even Sanskrit itself. Puranic religion as practiced was discounted and the Vedic religion now put down in black and white accepted as the ideal. Hindus in Mughal India had used Tulsidas' Ramayan as a tranquiliser. Hindus in British India could use Vedas, Upanishads and Gita as a stimulant. India's ancient scientific and literary achievements were brought home, and pre-Islamic history reconstructed. An old pillar near Allahabad, ignorantly described by the villagers as the danda used by Bhima to grind his bhang, was shown to be Ashoka's pillar. (Ashoka became a role model for Jawaharlal Nehru.)

Thus in the process of empire-building, the British discovered India's past not only for themselves but for the Indians also. This past glory, certified by the European masters themselves, transformed the Hindu psyche. It should be noted that this anamnesis, the recalling of things past, was strictly an upper-caste Hindu affair; the agricultural and artisan classes had no role in it. It boosted the Hindu morale and gave them a sense of purpose. It also made Hindus revivalist, which in turn increased the gulf between Hindus and Muslims, who were still reeling under the loss of imperial and nawabi glory. (Incidentally anamnesis is also used in the technical sense of a patient's remembrance of the early stages of his illness.)

Earlier the Hindus had never felt any need to give themselves a collective name. They did now. It will be more appropriate to use a new word 'Hinduist' (or 'Hinduvadi') to refer to this self-conscious identity, while retaining the old word Hindu for use in its traditional sense of referring to the Hindu tradition or way of life. The British thus transformed Hindus into Hinduists.

The discovery of the past glory spurred Hindus to compete with Europeans in the scientific field. Mahendra Lal Sircar while setting up (1876) a scientific laboratory, oddly named² Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, believed that "the only method by which the Hindu mind could be developed to its full proportion, was by the cultivation of the Physical Sciences". "The object of Dr. Sircar was not to make his countrymen a nation of artisans and mechanics, but to diffuse

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among them the ascertained principles of Western Science in the hope that the Hindus might, in course of time, add their own discoveries to their fellow brethren of the West” [6, p 42].

Again, Sir P C Ray (who preferred to be called acharya) concluded his monumental two-volume *History of Hindu Chemistry* (1907) thus:

The Hindu Nation with its glorious past and vast latent potentialities may yet look forward to a still more glorious future, and if the perusal of these will have the effect of stimulating my countrymen to strive for regaining their old position in the intellectual hierarchy of nations, I shall not have laboured in vain [6, p 145].

There was obviously no contradiction in seeking inspiration from the past glory and talking of a composite culture, as Ray did while addressing the 1923 convocation of Aligarh Muslim University:

Some of the greatest generals, greatest financiers, greatest ministers of the Muslim Kings and Emperors were Hindus. After a century and a half of British rule in India we were in ecstasies, why forsooth because a solitary Lord Sinha, Jasovanta Sinha, Jai Sinha, to mention only a few, were trusted with positions far more exalted and far more onerous? This Hindu-Muslim unity, this fusion in the ideas, the sentiments, the traditions of the two great races of India has not merely been confined to politics, it has filtered down to the inmost recesses of the social structure [6, p. 170]

A 1929 biography of Ray tells us, Welcoming the delegates to the Hindu Mahasabha at Calcutta in April 1925 Dr Ray exhorted the Sabha to confine its activities to the reform of internal abuses and to the consolidation of the different sections and castes of the Hindu society. He similarly advised the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others to have their own organisations and pursue their work of reform from within and to work with other communities in a broad liberal spirit, without hindering the growth of a united India”. [6, p. 171].

The idea here is of a commonwealth of sub-nations, which generate their own individual momenta.

English Education

Once the Mahrattas were finally crushed in 1817 and the British grip on India became unassailable, the British could afford to relax. The governor-general (Lord Hastings) loftily announced that the government of India did not consider it necessary to keep the natives in a state of ignorance in order to retain its own power [2, p.3]. As a matter of fact, the services of Indians were now required in running the administration[4]. India was already a thickly populated country where permanent white settlements were not possible. Bringing in staff from Britain would not only have been killingly expensive, but also detrimental to manufacturing capabilities back home. And finally after the disastrous Portuguese experiment, producing a sub-nation of half-casters was not even an option. Additionally, there was an underlying element of cultural conquest. To the British, their control of an ancient fabled country was a proof of the superiority of the Western way of thinking. Indeed, a constant theme in the European scheme of things was ‘improving the natives’.

As befits a cautious and clever ruler, the transition from the moonshee phase to the baboo phase was to be effected in an unobtrusive manner, and with the full and active support of the native leadership. Charles Grant’s (1746-1823) well meaning treatise “Observations on the state of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals; and on the means of improving it” advocating the cause of missions and education and written during 1792-97 was ahead of its time and ‘anticipatory’. It was only in 1830 that the court of directors wrote “we learn with extreme pleasure that ‘the time has arrived when English tuition will be widely acceptable to the Natives in the Upper Provinces” [2, p 32]. It is tempting to reduce history to glorification or condemnation of individuals and events. Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay’s (1800-59) flamboyant minute of February 2, 1835 belongs to this category. Crediting Macaulay with introducing English education in India will be like crediting victory in a cricket match to the batsman who scores the winning run.

The native initiative for English education came from Ram Mohun Roy (1772/74-1833). ‘a kulina brahmin’ whose great-grandfather (Krishna Chandra) served under the nawab of Bengal and was honoured with the title ‘Raya-Rayan’, later abbreviated to Roy and adopted as a family surname in preference to the caste name Bandhopadhyaya or Banerjee [6]. Ram Mohun’s patrimony included a rich post-Plassey zamindari which brought him a substantial net annual income of about Rs. 22,000 (on his two brothers’ death their share also came to him). Ram Mohun added to his fortunes by lending money at high interest to the spendthrift company officials.

Ram Mohun was a crusader against Hindu orthodoxy and proponent of “higher or purer dogmas of Vedantism”, for his views he was turned out of his home first by his father and later by his widowed mother. He studied Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, and learnt English during 1805-14, when he served the company first as a clerk and then as a dewan, “the principle native officer in the collectorate of revenue”. “His good English, good sense, and forcible arguments” were patronizingly complimented by Bishop Heber as “a real curiosity as coming from an Asiatic” [2, p 28]. In 1830, Ram Mohun was given the title of raja by the luckless Mughal emperor Akbar II so that the raja would plead the emperor’s case before the overseas masters [7]. (Incidentally, the surname Roy is also a derivative of raja!)

Following a May 1816 meeting of ‘English gentlemen and influential natives’ a substantial sum of Rs. 113,179 was collected and an Anglo-Indian College or vidyalaya opened on January 20, 1817 with less than 20 students [2, p 25; 8, p 476]. The college (more accurately still a school) had a precarious existence for six or seven years and would have closed down but for the efforts of David Hare, an illiterate watch maker turned social activist, who was later appointed a judge of Calcutta Court of Requests [7, p 476]. The college became established when it started receiving government grant. Finally in 1854 its senior department was taken over by the government and made into Presidency College. Earlier, Hindu and Muslim boys were hired by the British to learn traditional things from their elders and pass them on to the company. Now, Hindu boys from upper classes paid money from their own pocket to receive English education.

| | Punjab | | NWP | | Oudh | | Bengal | |
|---------------|--------|------|--------|------|------|------|--------|------|
| | V | E | V | E | V | E | V | E |
| Primary | 40.1 | 31.1 | 13.3 | 20.5 | 20.5 | 30.0 | 24.6 | -- |
| Middle | 34.5 | 26.3 | } 20.2 | 16.3 | 25.0 | 18.0 | 13.7 | 13.2 |
| High | | | | | | | -- | -- |
| | 48.4 | 20.2 | | | | | -- | 8.7 |
| College | 58.1 | 12.6 | 3.8 | 13.0 | 45.1 | 5.5 | 99.9 | 3.8 |
| Girls primary | 46.7 | 1.4 | 26.9 | 0 | 62.7 | 44.5 | 8.9 | -- |
| Girls middle | -- | 0 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.1 | -- |

TABLE 3: MUSLIM PERCENTAGE IN SCHOOLS IN 1881-82

Note: V=Vernacular, E=English Source: See 3, based on Ch 27.

Two points need to be noted here. First, the native initiative was made possible by the availability of English patronage. In the case of vidyalaya, the chief justice Sir Hyde East and David Hare acted as patrons. Six decades later Mahendra Lal Sircar's Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science enlisted the support of the Lt.-Governor Sir Richard Temple, because, as a 1929 account noted unselfconsciously, "the merchant princes and landed aristocrats, hungry for title and fame, would slavishly follow the footprints of the official head of the province" [6, p 32].

The second point is even more important. It is significant that the first government funded native institution for English education was named Hindu. The British sponsored Indian middle class was an all-Hindu affair, and an upper-caste affair at that. There is in fact no reason to expect that all castes should be represented in education in proportion to their numbers in the general population. If all castes were to feel equally motivated towards any goal, they will not have been different to begin with.

It is customary to describe the role of education in exalted terms. But the fact remains that the main expectation from education is that it will equip a person for earning his livelihood [9]. Thus class-room education had been of no interest to caste groups engaged in agriculture, manufacture, and menial service. It attracted only those castes that had traditionally been associated with learning, commerce, or penmanship. Accordingly, Brahmins learnt Sanskrit, banyas their secret script, and kayasthas and khattris Persian. The British found the Hindu love for Persian rather disconcerting. It was noted in 1827 about a school at Bareilly that "Hindus and Musalmans have no scruples about reading together" [2, p 186]. In the Punjab of 1856 "The Persian schools are of course invariably kept by Muslim teachers" and "generally held in or just outside the mosque..; yet they are attended largely by Hindus more attracted largely by Hindus more attracted by the Persian language than repelled by the Muhammadan religion" [8, p 290].

One can sense a certain feeling of regret at the absence of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. The British took immediate steps to remedy the situation by removing their 'ignorance' about each other. The 1858 report of the Punjab Director of Public Instruction describes the situation prevailing before the British annexation, and how it was remedied. "We found a people ignorant of the geography of their own province, ignorant that there was such a science as geography" This blissful ignorance was removed within two years. "The progress made is this in every Tehseele school there are boys able to give an intelligent account of the early Muhammadan invasions of India..."[8, p 302].

Indoctrination apart, the main aim of English education was to prepare Indians for government jobs. The British were no social reformers; upliftment of the

downtrodden was not on their agenda. They would rather exploit the status quo for their own benefit than change it. The response to English education therefore was on predictable caste lines. For the upper castes that had traditionally depended on government jobs and patronage, English was the new bread-and-butter language in place of Persian; they therefore filled the new class-rooms with alacrity. At Cawnpore of 1820 “the native children flocked to the school in pursuit of the English language” [2, p 188]. Thirty years later, “In Lahore as well as Umritsur, the anxiety to acquire English is remarkable” “Many natives of Bengal who possess a smattering of English find employment as teachers of that language” [8, p 280].

The lower castes on the other hand cannot have benefited from English education as far as their traditional bread earning was concerned. The number of new jobs was very small, and in any case the social structure so rigid that shift from traditional occupation was well nigh impossible. These castes therefore kept out. They could neither have expected nor got any leadership from the upper cases. (Probably the first and the only leader to take note of their plight was Mahatma Gandhi whose symbolic use of Charkha was no more than a dirge; and even this soon degenerated into an empty ritual.)

During the first 100 years of their lordship over India, the British introduced upper class Hindus to the English, language and literature, to western thought, to India’s glorious past, and to modern science and education. There thus emerged a new Hindu middle class entry into which was independent of the old caste structure and which could demand concessions from the government without offering subservience in return. The Hindus could now look the empire in the eye and ask for a system that was “more acceptable to the governed”. They now wanted a share in running the administration of their own country. It has been one thing for the British to deal with the demands of landed class. The assertiveness of the intelligentsia was an altogether different, more serious, matter and had to be tackled.

Earlier the British had assiduously cultivated the Hindus as a counterpoise to real or perceived Muslim hostility. Now, the Muslims were to be developed as a counter-poise to Hindu middle-class assertiveness.

| Provinces | Class of Institution | Total number of students | Muslims | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------|------------|
| Madras | Colleges, 1669 | 30 | 1.7 | |
| | High Schools | 4,836 | 117 | 2.4 |
| | Middle Schools | 18,553 | 723 | 3.8 |
| | Total | 25,058 | 870 | 3.4 |
| Bombay | Colleges | 475 | 7 | 1.4 |
| | High Schools | 5,731 | 118 | 2.0 |
| | Middle Schools | 14,257 | 781 | 5.4 |
| | Total | 20,463 | 906 | 4.4 |
| Bengal | Colleges | 2,738 | 106 | 3.8 |
| | High Schools | 43,747 | 3,831 | 8.7 |
| | Middle Schools | 37,959 | 5,032 | 1.32 |
| | Total | 84,444 | 8,969 | 10.6 |
| NW Provinces | Colleges | 223 | 29 | 13.0 |
| | High Schools | | | |
| | Middle Schools | 4,273 | 697 | 16.3 |
| | Total | 4,496 | 726 | 16.3 |
| Oudh | Colleges | 126 | 7 | 5.5 |
| | High Schools | | | |
| | Middle Schools | 1,081 | 195 | 18.0 |
| | Total | 1,207 | 202 | 16.7 |
| Punjab | Colleges | 103 | 13 | 12.6 |
| | High Schools | 453 | 91 | 20.0 |
| | Middle Schools | 2,671 | 703 | 26.3 |
| | Total | 3,227 | 807 | 25.0 |
| All the above provinces | Colleges | 5,334 | 192 | 3.6 |
| | High & Middle Schools | 1,33,561 | 12,288 | 9.2 |
| | Grand total | 1,38,895 | 12,480 | 8.9 |

TABLE 4: ATTENDANCE OF MUSLIM IN THE VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNMENT AIDED AND UNAIDED AS COMPARED WITH THE TOTAL ATTENDANCE IN 1881-82

Muslim Torpor

While the Hindu upper classes were adopting English, Muslims did not want to have anything to do with the British. “In 1825 government sanctioned the establishment of an institution at Murshidabad for the education of the Nizam family...”. In 1826 it was reported that the members of the family of the Nizam “not consenting to embrace the opportunity of entering the institutions, the Resident filed up the number of 50 students, on which six were to attend the college, 44 the school” [3,p 190].

When in 1835, the government decided to spend its funds exclusively on English education, “there was a petition from the Muhammadans of Calcutta, signed by about 8.000 people, including all the most respectable Maulavis and native gentlemen of that city. After objecting to it upon general principles, they said that the evident object of the government was the conversion of the Natives” [2, p 53].

This fear of conversion in the minds of Muslims stands in sharp contrast to the self-confidence of the Hindus who had not only taken initiative in asking for English education, but were also striving to discover a meeting ground between their own religion and that of their masters, who themselves had attested to the greatness of the former. One wonders whether behind the Muslim fear of conversion to the religion of the new rulers were the memories of their own earlier conversion to Islam for the same reasons. It is also noteworthy that the British foothold in Bengal became possible because of its large distance from the Mughal seat of power. This also meant a corresponding lack of self-confidence among Muslims in Bengal.

The initiative to end the torpor came from Delhi. The end of the Mughal dynasty made it easy for the Muslims to reconcile to the British rule. Lal Qila was no more a seat of power. It was now merely a historical monument. The new leadership persuaded the Muslims that mattered to shift the gaze from Lal Qila and set sights on the capital of the new empire. Leaving the field to the Hindus was counter-productive. An important development was the emergence of the Ram Mohun Roy of the Muslims, that is Maulavi Sayyid (later Sir Syed) Ahmad Khan (1817-98) whose ancestor had come to India from Herat [10]. Having observed the powerless pomp of the Mughal nobility from close quarters, he declined the hollow offer of his own grandfather’s title and a position at the last Mughal emperor’s court, and instead took up a job as a ‘serishtadar’, or a reader in a court, in the East India Company’s service. He steadily rose in the hierarchy and during the 1857 revolt saved the lives of a number of English men, women and children, for which “he earned a pension for life from the government” and acknowledgement as a leader of the Muslims. Syed Ahmad received a copy of Macaulay’s work from the viceroy in 1866, and in 1869 visited England, where he met a number of Englishmen “known to be keenly interested in the welfare of Muslims”. Incidentally, Sir Syed did not know English [11, p 105].

| | Punjab | NWP + Oudh | Bengal | CP | Madras | Bombay* | |
|---|--------|------------|--------|------|--------|---------|-----|
| Percentage of Muslims in total population | 59.6 | 13.4 | 32.3 | 3.6 | 6.3 | 19.7 | |
| Primary | 31.1 | 20.5 | 30.0 | -- | 7.8 | -- | |
| Middle | 26.3 | | | 13.2 | -- | 3.8 | 5.4 |
| | | 10.3 | 18.0 | | | | |
| High | 20.0 | | | 8.7 | -- | 2.4 | 2.0 |
| College | 12.6 | 13.0 | 5.5 | 3.8 | 7.7 | 1.7 | 1.4 |

TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS IN 1881-82 (ENGLISH EDUCATION)

Note: *50 percent of Bombay Muslims were from Sind. Source: [See 3, based on Ch 27]

| | Punjab | NWP + Oudh | Bengal | CP | Madras | Bombay |
|---|--------|------------|--------|------|--------|--------|
| Percentage of Muslims in total population | 55.8 | 13.4 | 32.3 | 3.6 | 6.3 | 19.7 |
| Percentage of Muslims in Urban population | 50.8 | 33.9 | 27.5 | 16.0 | 14.2 | 17.8 |
| Secondary School | 33.1 | 21.9 | 13.5 | 9.3 | 5.3 | 4.9 |
| Arts college | 18.2 | 19.0 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 1.5 | 2.6 |
| Prof. college | 19.6 | 17.7 | 3.5 | 4.9 | 1.7 | 1.8 |

TABLE 6: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS IN 1891-92

Source: [See 3, p 181]

| Exam | Total | Muslims* | Percentage |
|-------------|-------|----------|------------|
| Entrance | 6545 | 419 | 6.3 |
| FA | 2695 | 120 | 4.4 |
| BA,BSc, BOL | 905 | 51 | 5.7 |
| MA, MOL | 80 | 2 | 2.5 |
| BL | 147 | 7 | 4.7 |
| Medical | 264 | 8 | 3.4 |
| Engg | 47 | 0 | 0 |

TABLE 7: MUSLIMS AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF EDUCATION 1891-92

Note: *Percentage of Muslims in total population is = 21.8 Source: [See 3, p 179]

In 1871 the government of India took note of the educational backwardness of the Muslims and passed a resolution with a view to remedying the situation, noting that “it is much to be regretted that so large and important a class should stand aloof from active co-operation with own educational system and should lose the advantages both material and social, which others enjoy” [2, p 148]. Note that 60

years previously 'natives' had been used as a synonym for Hindus as if there were no Muslims; now Hindus were the 'others'.

A Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College Fund was started in 1872, "Princes and Nobles, Musalman and Hindu alike offered munificent endowments to the contemplated college. Nor was liberality altogether wanting on the part of Englishmen". School classes started in June 1875 with 66 students, all Muslim boarders. The next year 30 day scholars joined, including six Hindus [11]. The next year, on January 8, 1877, the viceroy laid the foundation stone for the college.

A wealth of data on education among Muslims is available from the 1882 report of the Education Commission and the 1895 book [2] *A History of English Education in India* by Syed Mahmud (son of Sir Syed Ahmad), which gives lengthy quotations from government documents and statistical data. The picture that emerges is simply told. Muslims generally did not like English education, especially college education (Tables 2-9). For example, in 1881 Muslims were 22.8 per cent of the population of the provinces. Yet only 9.2 per cent of high and middle school students were Muslims. At the college level, the percentage fell to a lowly 3.6 per cent. As expected, there was a slight improvement with time. In 1892, Muslim percentage at school had gone up to 14, and at college to 5.9 (Table 8). Still, the figures remained disappointing.

These bland all-India figures however are not very educative. It is necessary to break them up region-wise for a better comprehension of the phenomenon. Muslim response to education was not uniform throughout the country. It is only in north-west provinces and Oudh, corresponding to UP of today, that the percentage of Muslims in schools and colleges was higher than it was in the total population. Elsewhere Muslims were under represented in education. In 1891-92, in NWP and Oudh, Muslim percentage in total population was 13.4, in secondary schools 21.9, in arts colleges 19, and in professional colleges 17.7. In Bengal, Muslim percentage in total population was 32.3 in secondary schools 9.3, arts colleges 5.6, and in professional colleges 3.5 (Note that Bengal includes Orissa and Bihar. It will be more meaningful to look at Bihar data separately and in relation to NWP and Oudh.) In Madras, percentage at school 5.3 was consistent with the percentage in total population 6.3 but the percentage of Muslims at college was a dismal 1.7 per cent (Table 6). There is in fact no basis for supposing that Muslims should have responded as a body to English education [2]. It is easy to understand this differential response when it comes to Hindus, because their society is well known to be intricately structured. That the same general principle applies in the case of Muslims also is a little difficult to comprehend because of the well-entrenched, but mistaken, notion that Muslims are Muslims and nothing else. There are upper class Muslims, and there are lower class Muslims [13].

The British deliberately emphasized the caste hierarchy among Hindus, and at the same time underlined the foreign origin of Islam. Keen observers as they were, the British administrator-scholars did not fail to notice the capacity of the Hindu caste system to influence other religions and in particular the presence of caste structure among Muslims. Advertising this fact however will have made nonsense of the two population theory whereby the Hindus and Muslims were constantly referred to as two distinct races or tribes. Accordingly, Muslims in India were represented as a structure-less society of foreign origin, which by implication had no right to be on good terms with and acceptable to the Hindus.

The Muslim social structure is characterised by 'ethnicity' and caste. There was a small influx of Muslims from central Asia, who occupied high positions in Mughal India and considered themselves to be superior. At the 1891 census, about 55 per cent of the Muslims claimed to be holders of foreign titles, Syed, Sheikh, Mughal, Pathan, Arab, Blooch and Turk [2, p. 210]. There can be no doubt that actual percentage of Muslims of foreign origin must be much smaller, and that most of the claimants were pretenders. (The Hindi word sheikhi is used in the sense of boasting as in 'sheikhi maarana' or 'sheikhi baghaarana'. It is likely that the reference here is to the self consciousness of a newly acquired sheikh-hood.) This however does show the importance which foreign descent held among the upper class Muslims[13}. Obviously, the common man did not approve of this constant reference to the extra-territorial affiliation as can be seen from the old Punjabi saying "Jo sukh chhaju de chabaare, o Balkh na Bukhare" (The pleasure that you get at Chiajju's balcony, you cannot get at Balkh or Bukhara.)

Pride in foreign descent, or the pretension of it, arrogance of imperial glory, power and pelf were confined to the upper echelons of the Muslim society, which flourished in Mughal Delhi's zone of influence. Most Indian Muslim are however descendants of converts from Hinduism, who generally came from the lower castes. They were too poor and too unambitious to pretend to have a foreign bloodline. It is not clear what self-image they formed on conversion or what their Hindu brethren thought of their action. In any case, for these converts change of religion did not mean change of profession. Their social status and weltanschauung continued to be determined by their hereditary occupation and pre-conversion norms. This is best seen in south Indian rather than in the north. South Indian peninsula, protected by the oceans on two sides and shielded by north India from outside influences, is an excellent laboratory for studying social phenomena in their uncomplicated form. Central Asian connection is so far-fetched as to be non-existent in south India, and Delhi so far away that the Mughal grandeur did not give south Indian Muslims any sense of personal or collective fulfillment. Most south Indian Muslims have retained their caste customs and rituals, and till recently even caste names, especially

when they denoted high rank. Although conversions from individual castes were not large enough to make the groups endogamous, Muslims have retained their separate linguistic identity. Tamil-speaking Muslims, for example, consider themselves different from Urdu-speaking Muslims and generally do not intermarry. It is as if the south Indian Muslims were afraid of being disowned by their own castes and tended to subordinate, at least till recently, their religious identity to their caste identity.

| Province | Percentage of Muslims in Population 1891 | Percentage of Muslim Students in Population 1891 | | | | | |
|----------|--|--|------|------|--------------|------|------|
| | | School | | | Arts College | | |
| | | 1882 | 1887 | 1892 | 1882 | 1887 | 1892 |
| Punjab | 55.8 | 20.0 | 31.4 | 33.1 | 12.6 | 17.2 | 18.2 |
| NWP+Oudh | 13.5 | 16.3 | 21.6 | 21.9 | 13.0 | 13.2 | 19.0 |
| Bengal | 32.9 | 8.7 | 12.1 | 13.5 | 3.8 | 4.3 | 5.7 |
| Madras | 6.3 | 2.4 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.5 |
| Bombay | 16.3 | 2.0 | 4.4 | 4.9 | 1.4 | 2.6 | 2.6 |
| Total | 21.8 | 9.2 | 13.7 | 14.0 | 3.6 | 4.2 | 5.9 |

TABLE 8: INCREASE WITH TIME, 1882-92

Source: [See 3, pp 201,203]

| University | Arts | Law | Medical | Engineering |
|---------------------------|------|------|---------|-------------|
| Punjab | 21.9 | 19.0 | 17.1 | - |
| Allahabad(NWP+Oudh+CP) | 15.5 | 10.4 | - | • |
| Calcutta(Ben+Assam+Burma) | 3.9 | 2.8 | 1.4 | 0.6 |
| Madras (Mds+Coorg) | 0.9 | 1.1 | 3.3 | - |
| Bombay(Bom+Berar) | 1.8 | 0.9 | 2.0 | 0.6 |
| Total | 3.9 | 3.02 | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Average per year | 11 | 3 | 1 | 0.1 |

TABLE 9: PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES, 1858-93

Note: Roorkee Engineering College was under PWD

Another way of learning about the Muslim attitudes is to see how Hindus reacted to them. It is thus noteworthy that south India's lord Rama is different from north India's. In the south, he is Maryada Purushortam, a role model for all human beings. On the other hand his role in the north is more matter of fact; he is the

hero of the street play Ramlila.³ It is in fact generally true that Hindu festivals in north and south India though falling on the same tithes are celebrated differently. Hindu festivals in south India are pooja room-oriented, while in the north they are street-oriented. The reason is not difficult to discern. Conscious of their low-caste, non-imperial origins south Indian Muslims have been self-effacing. In return Hindus have not reacted to them; the Hindu festivals therefore have retained their traditional piety. The situation in north India stands in sharp contrast. Here Hindus responded to the Muslim power and assertiveness by bringing their festivities out on the streets. (Later, in the 20th century Bal Gangadhar Tilak did the same to Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra.)

There is a fundamental difference between the attitudes of Muslims who converted from lower castes of Hindus and of those who claimed foreign descent by virtue of foreign bloodline, Hindu upper caste background, or simple wealth. The lower caste Muslims, for the same reasons as were applicable in the case of their Hindu counterparts, kept themselves out of the catchment area of English education [12,14,15]. This phenomenon was noted as early as 1871 when the various local governments and administrations were asked to comment on the backward condition of education among Muslims. “Thus, while the Musalmans of Bengal were 32.3 per cent of the total population, their total proportion to the total number in schools known to the department was only 14.4 per cent. The situation was worse at college level, where out of 1,287 students only 52 or 4.04 per cent, “belonged to that race”. “During the last five years, out of 3,499 candidates who passed the Entrance Examination from these provinces, 132, or 3.8 per cent only were Musalmans. They ought to have been tenfold more numerous”. Out of 900 passed for the First Arts, only 11, or 1.2 per cent were Muslims. Out of 429 passes for BA, only 5 or 1.1 per cent were Muslims. “This painful inferiority that steadily increases in the Higher examinations was attributed “above all” to “the depressed condition of the bulk of Bengali-Musalmans, Musalmans in the first instance by conversion only and not by descent” [2, p 159].

The same refrain is found in the report from Bombay. Though the Musalmans in the Bombay presidency were reckoned in the census of 1872 at 2.5 million or 15.4 per cent of the total, half of them were from Sind alone. Excluding this division the percentage falls to 7.1 “Sind no doubt was in a very backward state, and the feelings of the Musalman Community there were strongly against the study of English”. Of the total number at school, only 31.8 per cent were Muslims, although they were 80 per cent of the population [3, p 157]. The DPI wrote: “The Muhammadans avail themselves of our lower schools, but do not rise to the higher schools and colleges. In the list of University graduates there are one Musalman MA and two BAs. I think the reason is to be found not in the poverty of the Muhammadan

community (for beggar Brahmins abound in the high school), but in their poverty and depressed social status combined. In this matter the Brahmin and Musalman are at opposite poles. Thus we have in Gujarat 10 Brahmins in the colleges and 20 in the high schools for every Musalman, but only 3 Brahmans for every Musalman in the lower class schools” [2, p 157]

Not surprisingly the Education Commission of 1882 in its summary considered it hazardous to attempt generalizations about “the wide differences in the circumstances of the Musalmans in the three presidencies”. Very wisely it chose to gloss over “the social and historical conditions of the Muhammadan Community in India” and instead concentrate on “causes of strictly educational nature” [2 p 169]. It is easy to see why numbers fell off rapidly at higher educational levels. For most students, belonging to lower social strata aiming too high would be *chhoti moonh barhi baat*. With each occupation, with each caste, was associated a certain social status. In principle, English education provided an opportunity for improvement in status. In practice a member of a lower caste group could not go up on his own. He needed positive exhortation from the state, or the upper castes, a booster rocket so to say, to impart him the escape velocity that would free him from the downward pull of tradition and deposit him in a higher orbit. In the absence of such a boost, the new opportunities were suitably truncated, so as to conform to the social status already assigned. In short, you could climb up the new ladder, but according to the old rules. As soon as you reached a level consistent with your caste and social status, you dropped out, leaving the higher echelons for those who were entitled to it on non-academic grounds.

In Delhi’s zone of influence, ‘social and historical factors’ worked in favour of Muslim education. Punjab in fact provides an interesting case study of how interest in education dwindled as one moved away from Delhi. The 1871 data set reveals the following: “In many of the districts of the Delhi, Hissar, Ambala and Amritsar Divisions the percentage in schools of all classes was considerably above the ratio which the Musalmans bore to the total population. In the districts east of the river Jhelum the number of Musalman students was almost in exact proportion to the total Musalman population. On the other hand, in the Derajat and Peshawar Divisions, where the Muslims formed more than 90 per cent of the whole population, their proportion to the total number at schools was only 55 per cent” [2, p 164] The same point is more forcefully made by data from North West Provinces and Oudh, the heartland of Muslim upper classes. Even in 1871, before Aligarh appeared on the education map the proportion of Musalmans in recognized school in NWP was 17.8 per cent as against their percentage of 13.5 in the total population (Table 2). In the entrance examination of 1870, 21 out of 175, or 12 per cent were Muslims. In 1881, out of 223 students at English college, 29, or 13 per cent were

Muslims. (Interestingly, oriental colleges had 444 students on their rolls, out of which only 17, or 3.8 per cent were Muslims) [2, p 161].

A point about girls' education may be made here. In 1881-82 in NWP English schools for girls had 664 students at the primary level and 62 in the secondary schools. None of these were Muslims. Apparently, Muslims did not believe in English education for girls. Vernacular primary schools for girls had 5990 girls, out of which 1616 or 26.9 per cent were Muslims, but the corresponding secondary schools had only six girls, all non-Muslims. It is thus clear that education for girls ended with puberty [2, p 162].

The 1882 report of the Education Commission said about the Aligarh College. "The importance of the college, however, is not confined to the special nature of the education it affords. Politically its influence is great and will be greater; for it is the first expression of independent Musalman effort which the country has witnessed since it came under British rule" [2, p 164]

M J Akbar [16] has suggested that Muslim minorityism began with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. This is not quite correct. Muslim minorityism began in 1757 itself when the nawab of Murshidabad was defeated at Plassey. It was then accentuated at every step: when the Rohilla chieftain Ghulam Qadir Khan marched into the imperial palace and blinded the Mughal emperor (1788); when Tipu Sultan of Mysore was destroyed (1799); when the company troops marched into Delhi (1802); when the nawab of Oudh disowned the Mughal emperor (1818; and finally when the Mughal dynasty itself ceased to exist (1857). Sir Syed Ahmad's contribution lies in the fact that he converted this minorityism into an asset.

Syed Ahmad's efforts no doubt accelerated the pace of development; they, however, did not reverse any trends. In any case his consistency remained confined to the upper class Urdu-speaking Muslims. In the 10 year period 1882-92, the percentage of Muslims at school in Punjab went up from 20 to 33, and at college from 12.6 to 18. In the same period, North West Provinces and Oudh saw an increase in Muslim percentages at school level from 16 to 22 and at college from 13 to 19. Other provinces also witnessed an improvement but only marginally. In 1892, Muslims made up 18 per cent of the population of Bengal, Madras and Bombay taken up together, but their percentage at school was only 8 and at college a lowlier 3.25 (See Table 8). Muslims who had not been enriched by the Mughal empire were not enriched by English education either. At the time of partition, most educated Muslims opted for Pakistan, leaving Indian Muslims more or less where they were before the arrival of Sir Syed Ahmad on the scene.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have discussed the development of English education in India upto the closing years of the 19th century. English education was introduced by the British with the twin purpose of impressing upon the natives the value of western thought and of preparing them for taking up jobs to assist in the administration of the country. The first protégés were the Hindus, who were fortified by the European discovery of their glorious pre-Islamic past. They had a headstart of two generations over Muslims in matters of education; during this period the Hindus had exclusive right to the British patronage.

Muslims entered the field much later. As against the Calcutta Hindu College which was set up in 1817, Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental School at Aligarh came up in 1875. What helped Muslims to come out of the post-Plassey sulk was the realization that Hindu intelligentsia was becoming powerful by default, the support available from the British who were now feeling uneasy with Hindu assertiveness, and the fact of the physical demise of the Mughal dynasty.

Certain features of the 19th century English education deserve to be noticed. First, actual number of educated persons was very small. In the 35 year period 1858-93, the five Indian universities produced a total of only 15,081 graduates of all types [2, p 186]. Secondly, the Hindus dominated. Except for North Western Provinces and Oudh and to a lesser extent Punjab, Muslims generally kept away. Each year on an average 419 Hindus graduated as against only 15 Muslims [2, p 186]. Thirdly and most importantly in the case of Hindus and Muslims alike, English education was strictly an upper class affair, in which lower castes had no role. This is significant, because the biggest losers under the British rule were the artisan classes, whose means of livelihood were destroyed by the colonial rulers as part of their contribution towards industrialization back home. At the 1891 census a total of 80 million people were classified as ‘artisans and village menials’. The largest single group in this category was the rather vague “village watchmen and menials” who numbered 12 million, or 15 per cent. In contrast the number of “iron smelters and gold wasters” was a minuscule 25,000 [2, p 209]. One can therefore guess that many persons listed euphemistically as watchmen and menials had lost their livelihood after the destruction of the traditional village economy.

While the upper classes made no effort to provide leadership to the lower classes, they indulged in a clever numerological sleight of hand. Suppose x per cent of the total population is Muslim. Then it is assumed that the ends of justice will be met if x per cent of the students are Muslims, even if all of them come from the upper classes. The same is of course true of Hindu percentages. The under-

standing seems to be this: lower classes will contribute to the general population, while the upper classes will make up the percentage at educational institutions.

A word about the present may not be out of place here. The wrongs done by the colonial rule should have been set right by India's own government. The dispossessed artisan classes should have been rehabilitated in new manufacturing activities. But the Indians instead of doing what the British were doing in their own country continued what the British had been doing in this country. The educated middle class was therefore swelled. It was assumed that what had earlier made this class obnoxious was its knowledge of English. English therefore was banished. As the next step, educational standards were continuously lowered so as to make education as irrelevant as the middle class had become.

In the Indian society, the more vital a person's role in the well-being of the society, the lower he ranks in the caste hierarchy. Thus, the castes engaged in production or maintenance are called backward castes. Using this definition in the modern context, we can say that a prosperous nation is one which consists almost entirely of backward castes. The solution to India's problems does not lie in transferring a handful of people from the traditional lower strata to the new middle class. Instead, the problems can only be solved by converting people from forward castes to backward castes.

Notes:

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¹ Pondicherry based, former director of Madras Observatory (John Warren) started work in 1811 on sough Indian methods of time keeping. The work started on "call of personal friendship" was later purchased by the government, as it would be "of service to gentlemen employed in the revenue and judicial departments". The work,

completed in 1825 “was denominated by some learned friends ‘Kala Sankalita’, Sanskrit word signifying doctrine of times”. Warren was so popular that when his daughter got married, the Hindus wanted to pay the expenses of the festivities. See R K Kochhar [1991], ‘French Astronomers in India during 17-19th Centuries’, *J British Astronomical Association*, 101, 95.

² The rather odd name for what was meant to be a research laboratory is explained by the fact that an Indian Association was set up the same year, 1876, by Surendra Nath Banerjee to protect the employment interests of educated Indians.

³ Ramayana is in a way the Picture of Dorian Gray of the Hindus. If, as the Puranas say, Rama is a historical figure, then as per archaeological evidence, he cannot have lived east of Yamuna. (R K Kochhar [1991], ‘Looking at the History of Indo Aryans’, *Mainstream*, November 30). The geographical setting later assigned to the story corresponds to the spread of the Indo Aryans. Addition of details to the story (like Rama’s killing an achhoot for studying Vedas) reflects the growth of Brahminism, and its public performance symbolizes its use as a shield against Islam.

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Nicholas Schmidle's *To Live or to Perish Forever*

Reviewed by David Waterman

To Live or to Perish Forever: Two Tumultuous Years in Pakistan. Nicholas Schmidle. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009. 255 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8050-8938-7.

Nicholas Schmidle's book is the result of a project funded by the Institute of Current World Affairs, the author having been chosen as a Phillips Talbot Fellow in 2006; while Schmidle's original destination was Iran, the hard-line anti-American rhetoric following the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad caused him to change course for Pakistan instead. The book takes its title from Rahmat Ali's 1933 pamphlet "Now or Never; Are We to Live or Perish For Ever?," advocating a separate state of Pakistan, published three years after Iqbal made public his idea of a semi-autonomous political entity within an Indian federation (7). A combination of contemporary history / geopolitics and travel memoir, the book gives behind-the-scenes accounts of the implosive / explosive formula of twenty-first century Pakistan, its credibility founded on the personal risk to Schmidle himself. The informal tone generally succeeds in making facts, figures and person / place names more engaging for a wider audience – by which I mean outside the Beltway – although regrettably the tone does occasionally slip into a semi-gonzo journalism that Hunter Thompson would have recognized: "Musharraf lost his mojo," for example (10).

Contemporary Pakistan did not come about overnight, and Schmidle does a very good job of tracing the historical context for readers who are perhaps a bit rusty on such details, whether the 1400-year-old conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims (16), or the more recent geopolitical stutterings which led to the Taliban's 1996 victory in Afghanistan (19). Schmidle's principal strong point, however, is his ability to give a human face to those he meets along the way, and in doing so invites the reader into the story; here he succeeds where many others do not. His philosophy from the start of this unlikely project is to be frank with those he encounters, revealing his identity as an American, non-Muslim and writer, combined with a genuine interest in learning the language and meeting people from all social strata. His approach pays off, as many of those he meets are men of power and in-

fluence, able to open doors for him and, when necessary, get him out of a tight spot. Indeed, without such protection and valuable advice, it seems almost inconceivable that Schmidle would have survived; as it is, his ability to remain in Pakistan for two years before being deported is outstanding.

His first immersion in Pakistani politics comes about when he is invited to attend a large Shia gathering, where Allama Abbas Kumaili's sermon, recalling the story of Hussein, sends the crowd into a frenzy (26). Shortly thereafter he makes the acquaintance of Farooq Sattar, a member of the National Assembly and leader of the Muttahida Quami Movement, who introduces him, on the way to a funeral in Hyderabad, to the intricacies of *mohajir* politics, those Muslims who moved from India to Pakistan in 1947; both the rally and the funeral highlight for Schmidle the fact that Pakistanis tend to vote according to their ethnic or sectarian allegiance, regardless of a specific party's platform (29; 38). A visit to a ten-day workshop entitled "Madrassas and the Modern World" allows the author to see reformers at work, in this case Dr. Shazia of Karachi University, as she tries to bring up to date an audience of mullahs by pointing out that a free market, credit cards and Wal-Mart are all compatible with Islam: "shocking the madrassa teachers seemed to be [her] unstated goal" (57). While in the West madrassas are understood as Koranic schools for training extremists, we are reminded that within Pakistan such schools are more often seen as a way for poor families to educate their children, a role that the State often fails to ensure. "Our problem in Pakistan," says Dr. Ata-ur-Rahman, "is not the madrassas. Our problem is clean drinking water. Our problem is sanitation. Our problem is health care," thus effectively placing poverty at the foundation of other social ills (62). A case in point: the unrest in Baluchistan, linked to poverty in one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country, and the government's insincerity with promises of turning the fishing village of Gwadar into a modern, economically vibrant port city (70-71); Schmidle's own conversations with Baluchi opposition leader Akhtar Mengal will immediately attract the attention of Pakistan's intelligence agencies.

In an effort to understand all of Pakistan, especially its apparent identity crisis, Schmidle makes the journey to the "other" Pakistan, Bangladesh, to cover upcoming elections, although they are cancelled just as he arrives by the President, Iajuddin Ahmed, who then declared martial law (106). Schmidle notes that even in Bangladesh, founded as a secular country, Islam is appropriated in the interest of attracting political allies (108). Returning to Karachi, the author finds himself in a city under siege, the result of a planned visit by suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, perhaps Musharraf's most powerful enemy; Schmidle cites this event on May 12, 2007, as the point of no return for Pakistan's President, "willing to subvert law and order to keep power" (127). The next nail in Musharraf's

coffin, described in detail by Schmidle, is “Operation Silence,” the storming of the Red Mosque in Islamabad to dislodge opposition forces led by Abdul Rashid Ghazi; Bin Laden himself condemned the President’s actions (154).

Never one to shy away from a dangerous situation, the author then heads for the Taliban-controlled Swat Valley, only a four-hour drive from the capital, what he calls “a different kind of Pakistan” (158), a visit made possible only through the protection and *laissez-passer* of Iqbal Khan, the District Amir, a journey which permits Schmidle to meet a large number of Taliban commanders (167). Back in Islamabad, Benazir Bhutto had just recently returned from exile, and her presence in the country, added to the pressure on Musharraf stemming from the lingering Chaudhry affair, lead the President to impose a state of emergency, seen by many in Pakistan as meddling by the CIA on Musharraf’s behalf. At the end of December 2007, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated, plunging the country into yet another political crisis, and paving the way for Asif Ali Zardari to inherit the Pakistan People’s Party and thus confront Musharraf; eight months later he resigned the Presidency. Schmidle closes the book with a surreal description of his second departure from Pakistan, tracked by “the agencies” as he leaves with a US Embassy escort in a bullet-proof car, amid news reports of his own kidnapping (229).

Nicholas Schmidle worries about the future of Pakistan – not simply the Pakistan of violence, not simply the Pakistan which is a keystone of geopolitics, but the Pakistan with a human face, where people construct their lives among poverty and insecurity, where people worry about educating their children and obtaining medical care. Practical, everyday worries so often overlooked in Western accounts of Pakistan, and that Schmidle’s book does an excellent job of bringing to the fore. *To Live or to Perish Forever* is recommended for those readers who want to attach human faces and individual stories to the “problem” of Pakistan.

Daniyal Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*

Reviewed by Sohomjit Ray

In Other Rooms, Other Wonders. Daniyal Mueenuddin. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009. 247 pages. ISBN: 978-0-393-06800-9.

Should Daniyal Mueenuddin's debut collection of short stories, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009) be considered a part of Pakistani literature, or should it be considered a part of the American literary landscape, already so enriched by the writers of South Asian diaspora? Salman Rushdie's inclusion of the first story in the collection ("Nawabdin Electrician") in the anthology entitled "Best American Short Stories 2008" by no means settles the question, but provides a useful frame in which to discuss it. The consideration of the question of nationality with regards to literature (it is fully debatable whether such a thing can be said to exist, although that debate is well beyond the scope of this review), of course, generates another very pertinent one: is the question important at all? In response to the latter question, one needs only to look at the reviews of the book published in a few of the renowned American newspapers to realize that the question *is* important, and also why.

Dalia Sofer notes in her review of the book in *The New York Times* that "women in these stories often use sex to prey on the men, and they do so with abandon at best and rage at worst — in this patriarchal, hierarchical society, it is their sharpest weapon" and that "the women are not alone in their scheming. Manipulation unifies these stories, running through them as consistently as the Indus River flows south of Punjab," before concluding: "[f]or a country whose name means 'land of purity,' Pakistan is startlingly blemished." Michael Dirda remarks in his review in *The Washington Post* how "[t]hese connected stories show us what life is like for both the rich and the desperately poor in Mueenuddin's country, and the result is a kind of miniaturized Pakistani 'human comedy.'" The consensus is clear—eight short stories in a collection by a debutant can be said to authentically portray a whole nation. If the women in Mueenuddin's stories use sex to their advantage, and men show themselves to be as adept in manipulation as the women, the Pakistani society can be safely concluded to be 'blemished.' It is expected of these stories

to show “us,” the audience from the global North—the consumer of the delicious tales about unscrupulous thieves and seductive sweepresses in the third world—exactly how the petty and grand machinations of God’s plenty contrive to construct a *comédie humaine à la Balzac* in miniature in the global South.

It should be noted that Mueenuddin neither claims nor disclaims the status of being an insider who is in a position to supply knowledge accessible only to the members of a particular in-group, in this case, the redoubtable and putative monolith of Pakistani society. Speaking about his sense of identity to Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg of *The Wall Street Journal* he comments: “There is no balancing my sense of identity. I’m always rolling back and forth along the spectrum, from Pakistani to American, depending on what I’m doing and where... I believe that this fluid identity is useful to me as a writer, because I’m always looking at myself and my surroundings from the outside.” This can be dismissed as sitting on the fence, or falling in line with the classical figure of the unobtrusive but observant poet found in Browning’s “How It Strikes a Contemporary”:

He took such cognizance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody--you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much. (ll. 30-35)

The choices Mueenuddin makes as a writer might be a reason why his stories are read to be so stringently representative. Historically, the short story cycle has been used by authors who have emphasized a strong sense of place or community in their works: James Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914), Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), and more recently, Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozshah Baag* (1992). It can be argued that what these authors attempt is a negotiated verisimilitude in their works—negotiated by their subjectivity and aesthetic predispositions—and not absolute representational veracity (if there exists such a thing) or authenticity. Nothing excuses a conflation between the two, especially on a national scale.

Any impulse to offer grand cultural/national generalizations lightly after reading these stories seems all the more unintelligible, because Mueenuddin demonstrates clear signs of transcending the local, the specific, and the individual to gradually bring the universal into focus. In these stories populated by characters from all cross-sections of a society that is in transit from an old, feudalistic lifestyle to a burgeoning capitalist globalized economy, the need of human beings to connect

with each other becomes paramount. In “A Spoiled Man,” Rezak becomes angry when his effort to share a “time-expired bird” is politely rejected by the waiter at Kalapani Bazar (223). The tragedy in the lives depicted in these stories stem basically from losing a precious human connection achieved after much compromise and deliberation.

The nature of the compromise offered as a price of this human connection is heavily gendered. The women in the stories use sex, but not so much to ‘prey’ as to find the joy of connecting to another human being. In “Saleema,” we find a woman who uses her sexual charms without any scruples. As the narrative voice comments, “[h]er love affairs had been so plainly mercantile transactions that she hadn’t learned to be coquettish” (40). Desperately seeking male protection in a strictly patriarchal society that would not tolerate sexual agency in a woman, Saleema still retains the human need for companionship and intimacy. When her affair with the cook in the Harouni household fails, she “angle[s] for one of the drivers,” but rebuffs their crude come-ons with a terse “Go to hell” (32). She is not looking for just protection and sex, but a deeper intimacy. Her one question to Rafik before they part forever is to verify that she had, in fact, been loved.

In “Provide, Provide,” Mueenuddin illustrates the primordial impulses evoked by the possibility of dying without this connection. As Frost writes in the poem from which the title of the story is taken:

Too many fall from great and good
 For you to doubt the likelihood...
 Better to go down dignified
 With boughten friendship at your side
 Than none at all. Provide, provide! (ll. 5-6, 19-21)

For Jaglani, this affair is an effort by him to have one meaningful relationship in his life, while for Zainab, it is the only means to have a child. It is a cruel fact of Mueenuddin’s bibliocosm that this “boughten friendship” amounts to nothing for both of them—Jaglani realizes that his affair has been a mistake, and Zainab is left without her adopted child.

Mueenuddin’s reach and expanse within his limited frame is extraordinary. His sweeping gaze conjures up a remarkably unsentimental vision of the poorest underclass (“Nawabdin Electrician,” “A Spoiled Man,” “Saleema”), the rich upper class still adapting to a new world that has no place for a feudalistic lifestyle (“In Other Rooms, Other Wonders,” “Lily,” “Our Lady of Paris”), and those in between (“Provide, Provide,” “About a Burning Girl”). He is equally at ease describing the newly emerging narcissistic self-importance of a man who has just survived a

deadly assault or the inevitable destruction of a poor maid who has been too free with her favors as he is while giving the reader in a few deft strokes, the portrait of a typical upper-class woman from the feudal aristocracy: “She had been a famous beauty, from a prominent, cultured Lucknow family. Now at forty-five she knew everyone of a certain class in Karachi, went to dinners and to the polo and to all the fashionable weddings, flew often to Lahore and Islamabad, and summered in London” (144). It is precisely because of this range that the focus on the universality of human experience and the need to connect is given a new dimension.

In “Lily” and in “Our Lady of Paris”, the characters recite James Merrill from memory, repeat famous adages attributed to Louis XV in original French in regular conversation, elegantly talk about popular films made on Graham Greene’s novels and show off their collection of antique art and impeccable fashion instinct to impress and put one over another, but the glitter and the sheen does not disguise the fact that these lives are as broken and laced with human desires, fears and sorrows as that of their less-fortunate counterparts. In a much-anticipated juxtaposition of the center and the periphery, we see the rich bride-to-be suddenly come across her absolutely disenfranchised neighbors: “Hanging there at the far end, disembodied faces rippled behind the plastic, three, four, five of them, fixed on her, distorted, larger and then smaller as the breeze shook the tent. . . These must be from the slum, the people who lived illegally on the banks of an open sewage channel that drained this millionaires’ district” (198). In stark contrast to the bride’s bejewelled attire, these faces appear “disembodied,” denied their full humanity in this spectral synecdochic presence.

Explaining in a blog interview why he chose to write interconnected stories or a short story cycle, Mueenuddin observes that “most good collections tell a larger story, the story of the whole”(“The Elegant Variation”). To read this pursuit of a larger story that defines the creative impetus behind this collection as an essentialist quest to tease out the general characteristics of a whole nation would be too myopic. Mueenuddin’s ‘larger story’ is conceived in terms of the human, not the national, and should be read accordingly.

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Mushaira: Pakistan's festival of Poetry

By Louis Werner

The announcer breaks into the evening's proceedings to ask the driver of the car with license plate 6734 to please move it from the emergency exit immediately¹.

The 15,000 people in the crowd rustle and fidget with impatience. "Enough with numbers. Now listen to my words," says Ali Zeryoom, the man who has been interrupted. "If patience is defeat, then my country has lost to yours."

No, this is not a political speech, nor a diplomatic address, nor even an awards ceremony after an international cricket match. Ali Zeryoom is an Urdu poet, and he is reciting the first verse of a couplet from a ghazal he has chosen for the occasion of the Aalami Mushaira, the 18th annual dusk-to-dawn international poetry symposium in Karachi, Pakistan. His listeners are now quiet. When he completes the second verse, whose unvarying refrain word is so familiar to the crowd that they shout it out in unison, they roar in the traditional accolade of Urdu poetry aficionados: "Vah, vah! Vah, vah!" Fifteen thousand right hands are thrust toward Ali.

The master of ceremonies, or maizban, is Rizwan Siddiqui, a well-known television personality. He is seated to Ali's left, and like all the two dozen poets onstage waiting their turn to recite, he sits cross-legged on an ample pillow. He interjects good-naturedly, "These are not your words!" Ali answers, "If not mine, then whose are they?" And immediately he launches into another kind of poem, a nazm, on the subject of motherhood, which now has the crowd clapping rhythmically.

A mushaira is usually a refined and intimate affair, often a private gathering of poets and knowing connoisseurs of that most demanding of poetic forms, the ghazal, whose compression of deep meaning into few words can, at its best, produce a sublime literary experience. In Mughal times, a mushaira invitation would have commonly specified the tarah, or fixed rhyme scheme and meter, to be used throughout the evening. As latter-day poetic standards have slipped from the heights occupied by such masters of the ghazal as Mirza Ghalib (1796–1869) and Mir Taqi Mir (1723–1810), mushairas today often mix many forms of poetry, including ribald jokes, political humor and sentimental love lyrics that can be semi-toned in a style called tarannum.

Karachi's Aalami Mushaira (aalami means "worldwide" and mushaira is a public recitation of poetry) was established in 1989 by a group of businessmen and town fathers who belonged to a benevolent society called Sakinan-e Shehr-e Qa'id (Citizens of the City of the Founder), referring to Karachi, birthplace of Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Retired banker Azhar Abbas Hashmi remembers that, in the 1980's when Karachi was undergoing great political and social tensions, he and other members of the society wanted to bring the city together around some common element. They chose Urdu, Pakistan's national language and a tongue with particularly poignant meaning in Karachi: In 1947, after the partition of Pakistan and India, the city took in so many refugees from all over the subcontinent that Urdu, as lingua franca, supplanted the region's indigenous language, Sindhi.

Hashmi also looks back to a landmark Karachi mushaira held in 1952, the first time Urdu poets crossed the border from India, at which were present such luminaries as Jigar Muradabadi, Josh Malihabadi, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Zehra Nigah, known as the city's songbird. "That helped to heal some old wounds," he says, "and we were aiming for something similar again—a mission, not simply a mushaira."

Yet Hashmi worries that Urdu's high literary culture is being lost. "Today we have a fast life, too fast for poetry," he says. "I remember fondly my school days, when my father and schoolmaster were my only teachers. Now our teachers are the mass media and the supermarket." As the comic poet Amir ul-Islam recited later that night, "Our language is supposed to be Urdu / I wish we would speak real Urdu."

Indeed, patronage—or at least a comfortable income—is essential for poets to flourish. William Dalrymple's recent biography of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor and himself an accomplished poet, quotes a letter that Mirza Ghalib wrote to Queen Victoria, reminding her of the tradition of royal support for the arts, of how rulers "rewarded their poets and well-wishers by filling their mouths with pearls, weighing them in gold, and granting them villages and recompense."

The romantic poet Wasi Shah from Lahore takes his pearls and gold in the form of royalties from his books, which sell in the millions. Dashing handsome, dressed for the night's mushaira in a red tie and business suit, he recites, "I wish to be your bracelet / When you go to bed, you will be with me / When you push me up your arm, you will play with me / When you go to sleep at night / I will be a pillow for your eyes."

In the audience, 23-year-old banker Sara Khan hangs on his every word. "I like Wasi Shah because I am alone, still waiting for someone to enter my life, and his verse reflects my sad heart." Sajjad Hussein, a student of statistics at Urdu University, has come to his first mushaira more out of curiosity than sentiment. "My home is in the far north, near the Siachen Glacier in the Karakoram Range," he

says. “My mother tongue is Balti, very different from Urdu, and more difficult. But I always want to learn new things about poetry. Ghalib is already my favorite.” For her part, Farrouk Jehan has brought her nine-year-old nephew along with a picnic, and she plans to stay until the early hours. “Tomorrow is a holiday, so we can sleep late. I want him to love poetry as much as I do.”

Backstage after his recitation, Shah speaks passionately about his craft to a bevy of fans, including 12-year-old Anum Masood, who wields a pink autograph book dedicated to her favorite poets. “I write a poetry of love, and I want the world to know that we Pakistanis are about more than terror,” Shah says. “Our poetry does not produce violence.

“Just as I am living as a poet, I want to die as a poet, in peace.” And then he paused to recite the first couplet he ever wrote, at the age of eight, when his father died: “Like bubbles in the water, bubbles always go to clear / On the day your father dies, bubbles also disappear.” Anum, however, seems more starstruck by Shah’s celebrity than touched by his words as a grieving child.

Translating Urdu poetry, especially the ghazal, is an impossible task. Better call it “rendering a rough meaning,” or “catching the gist of the words.” There is so much ellipsis, ambiguity and economy that a typical seven- or ten-word verse in Urdu must sprawl in all directions when put into English. The late poet Agha Shahid Ali’s English-language translations of ghazals by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, set on facing pages from the originals, run double their length. Yet sometimes, with the help of the poet herself, a sense of possibility can be achieved.

Take this couplet, a study in paradox and the emotional confusion that grief often brings, from Hijab Abbasi, a housewife, former social worker and previous Aalami Mushaira poet, who tonight is sitting backstage in the VIP section, enjoying the recitations from a comfortable club chair. On the occasion of the death of her father’s best friend, she wrote, “Your death brought happiness / But once buried, I am always sad.” Clearly such a poem is best suited for being whispered among intimate friends, not over a microphone before a crowd.

Yet even to a non-Urdu speaker, a ghazal poet’s physical expression during recitation can guide further meanings. The hands of Ahmed Navid, a Karachi poet, for example, are in constant motion, as if hiding, pulling or scattering his syllables. He holds his hands together, tents them, points and waves them. At times, he is shrugging off a rhyme, smoothing the air, or shaking his fingers. At others, he is saluting, beseeching or forgiving his listeners. Only a single couplet from a good 20 minutes of recitation can begin to be captured in words alone: “What are you trying to hide, that even your clothes cannot hide? / Silence, for which even an audience is not sufficient.”

Other arts and cultural groups take advantage of the presence of poets from India and other parts of Pakistan —Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Faisalbad and Quetta— attending the Aalami Mushaira to sponsor more specialized events in private venues on the evenings that follow. A mushaira at the elite Karachi Club takes place on the lawn, the audience in glittery salwar kameez and neat kurtas, reclining on bolsters, enjoying tea served by bow-tied waiters. Many of the same poets recite here, too, and, like the Aalami Mushaira, this evening too runs toward dawn. Although the crowd is more reserved in its praise, more discriminating in its tastes, they too offer hearty acclamations of “Vah, vah!” when earned.

Sehar Ansari, the erudite former head of the Urdu Department at Karachi University, is the last to recite, an honor always given to the most esteemed poet of the group. He recites a couplet with multiple meanings in this time of both domestic and cross-border strife in Pakistan: “Why use fire to extinguish fire? / Kill us with love just as well.”

Another follow-on mushaira is held at the markaz sadat-e amrohvi, the community center for migrants to Karachi from the town of Amroha, near Delhi— famous as the birthplace of some of the greatest Urdu poets, starting with Ismail Amrohvi in the 17th century and stretching forward into the late 20th century with Rais Amrohvi, his brother Jaun Alia and the master of all Amrohvi poets, Mussafi. The club is compiling a biographical dictionary of native-son poets that currently includes 566 names.

Naqoosh Naqvi, the maizban for this mushaira, was born in Amroha in 1942 and came to Pakistan a decade later. He is well versed in the maizban’s job, having hosted more than 50 such occasions, so he knows just when to cut a long-winded poet short, and when to cajole a great poet into an encore by exhorting him, “Mukarrar, mukarrar!” (“Again, again!”)

Dr. Kunwar Bechain, a retired professor from Meerut University near New Delhi, is reciting at the Aalami Mushaira, and visiting Pakistan, for the first time. “I am very happy to be here,” he says. “The feelings are the same across the border because poets are never divided by a line.” His own surname means “restless,” so by way of introduction, the maizban jokes, “We too are restless for you to start.” Bechain begins with a sung couplet: “There are thousands of fragrances in this world / But nothing better than the smell of bread to a hungry man.” The maizban tries to animate the crowd: “Applaud him, you are not sitting in front of a jury!” Bechain ends with a couplet about how words can be misused: “I wanted to make toys of them / but the world has turned them into weapons.”

The logistics of serving 15,000 poetry fans over an eight-hour performance are daunting. The day before the mushaira, the organizing committee was joined by Karachi deputy mayor Nasreen Jalil to make certain that the catering company

that had been hired could spread sufficient carpets for the capacity crowd. A road grader had smoothed the dirt on the parking lot behind Urdu University, and the stage platform and three central poles strung with electric lights had been erected. High-swinging television camera dollies for live broadcast on Metro-One TV were in position, too.

By nine o'clock the following night, the crowd begins to trickle in. Some stop outside the gates to sample the kebabs and browse the bookstalls. Water stations ring the seating area. It has been 44 degrees Celsius (111° F) that day, and the pre-monsoon heat is still withering. At 11:00 p.m, an imam recites a verse from the Qur'an, and the maizban calls for attention and introduces the first poet. More than 25 are scheduled to appear; most remain seated onstage throughout the night. The reciting poet, who takes a front seat on a raised, low-railed dais, often turns back to his fellows after completing a particularly fine verse, as if to seek inside approval.

Toward four o'clock in the morning, a crowd favorite, Ather Shah Khan, a humorous poet known by his pen name, "Jadi," is introduced, and the crowd shakes itself from the reflective, introspective mood that the previous ghazal poet had established. In a buffoon's voice, Jadi brings the cross-legged crowd to its metaphorical feet. "Uncle, where are you tonight? / Uncle, I don't see you / Maybe he has died! / I also was young, two years ago." His verse aims for the funny bone more than the cerebral cortex, yet this very mix of the high and the low, the comical and the conceptual, is what makes the Aalami Mushaira such a yearly success.

Ahmed Navid, who works in the advertising business, is reciting here for the second time, and although his verse is aimed higher, he recognizes the positive role that such a mass gathering, whether for poetry or for sports, plays in city life. "Poetry is itself a medium," he says. "It doesn't need a show. If you are a good poet, you don't need a stage. But as the great poet Mir Taqi Mir said, 'What is a mushaira? Just people getting together.'"

A mushaira of this size brings out the enthusiasts as well as the eccentrics. Backstage, many amateur, self-published poets stuff their books into the hands of those better known. Others are eager to recite to whoever will lend an ear. Saeedul Kabir intones a few verses from American poet Carl Sandburg's "The People, Yes," which he follows with an Urdu poem by Sahir Ludhianvi that he says Sandburg's directly inspired. Nearly out of breath, he next declaims from English romantic poet Robert Southey's "Battle of Blenheim," and then Josh Malihabadi's poem on the very same subject—the emptiness of military victory after blood has been spilled on all sides.

The future of Urdu poetry may be found in the verse of intense, long-haired Atif Tauqeer, who works as a late drive-time disc jockey. Besides being a poet, he is, according to his Web site (<http://www.facebook.com/atifthe poet>), a man who

gets his words out any way he can, working as a scriptwriter, producer, director, storyteller, actor and editor. In the cluttered world of multimedia, he knows that poets must diversify their performance space, beyond mushairas and books, if they want to be heard. Atif was the third poet to recite at the Aalami Mushaira, when the crowd was still streaming in and before it had settled down to really listen.

From Atif's Web site, fans can download his recitations, join a live chat room and participate in a poetry-lover's forum—all very 21st-century. "Couplets are heartbeats," he says. "Some poems can be written in a moment, because love needs only a moment." Somehow, digital audio seems entirely appropriate for his of-the-moment modernity. "Media should uplift people, not keep them down. We have so much we must think about in our times—climate change, terror, racism. A poet is fortunate if people can understand what he wants to say."

The sky is still dark when the first call to the dawn prayer sounds from neighboring minarets. It is time to conclude, although the maizban has done an admirable job in keeping on schedule. No poet's feelings have been hurt, and several have been singled out for the praise of "Vah, vah!" that follows the calls "Mukarrar, mukarrar!" Only one poet is still to recite, and he has ample time to finish before the final prayer call in another 15 minutes.

At the final couplet, the maizban hurries words of thanks to the poets, their listeners and the organizing committee. The task of knitting together this polyglot city of more than 12 million residents—with more than 1500 migrants arriving every day from all parts of the country—has not been easy. The Aalami Mushaira, this celebration of Urdu poetry at its best, is one of the few glues that hold. As the Karachi poet Tariq Sabzwari recited earlier in the night, Whatever be my city's air, I'll love it still Whether in the sun or shade This land of mine, this land of ours.

¹ Republished, without accompanying pictures, from *Saudi Aramco World* Vol. 59, No. 5 (2008) with the permission of the author. To see the earlier version visit: <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/200805/mushaira.pakistan.s.festival.of.poetry.htm>

Celebration on the Birth of a Second Child Through 'ATAN'

By Shaikh Muhammad Ali

One of my colleagues invited me for dinner celebration. He was recently blessed with another son in August, 2008. I was told that the celebration will include the Pakhtoon dance known as 'Atan' as well and knowing that ethnically he is a Pukhtoon / Pashtoon ¹, I accepted the invitation immediately.

The history of 'ATAN'

“Dance has been an important part of most cultures from their earliest times. Dancing serves as a social, spiritual, artistic, and emotional expression in different parts of the world. It is a part of celebrations, ceremonies, entertainment, and teaching in different cultures across the world. Before the introduction of written languages, dance was one of the primary methods of passing stories and rituals down from generation to generation. of committing knowledge to memory, and of learning precision movements, such as swordsmanship” ².

“While many other art forms; music, painting and poetry, can be traced through human history by physical artifacts, dance, on the other hand is difficult to trace. Dancing relies on the direct communication of the 'vocabulary' of movement and stories from person to person, which is similar to oral history and story telling. This vocabulary of movement is used by dancers and choreographers to describe or imitate the natural world (both living and inanimate objects), or to express common themes and emotions. Some movements are universal and recognized by people around the world, while others are unique to the region or people to which it belongs”³.

Pukhtoons possess a rich culture with all the ruggedness on the one hand and all the softness, romance and beauties on the other. The Pukhtoon dances have been defined as a symbol of courage and heroism by the British and present the desire and readiness of a tribe to go into a battlefield for Jihad. With heavy and insistent drumming, the dancers who are usually male move with uniform rhythm and steps. They dance usually in circles or columns holding different items of daily

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life (swords, guns, handkerchiefs, etc (any colorful cloth).) in their hands and mix the crude sounds of their possessions with the rhythm of drums and *surmay*⁴.

Both sexes dance the Atan, a national and ethnic dance in which dancers with arms raised, folded at the waist, step in a slow, rhythmic pattern around a circle. Atan is performed in same-sex groups during weddings and other celebrations. I have come to learn that there are about 32 variations of the Atan.

Back to the story

My love for ‘Atan’ started when I was pretty young and would see the Pathan dance in ecstasy whenever he would be happy and was celebrating a happy occasion . This love came close to fruition when I accompanied a second battalion of medical students (mostly Pathans) to Cuba again this time in July 2008. This year round I accompanied them to Jose Maria Aguillar School of medicine in Matanzas city, Cuba.

For all the three nights I was there, the Pukhtoon scholars would gather during Mirianda time and dance their hearts out on the ‘Atan’. There were about 14 boys who would do this while two were exceptionally good and would outperform all the others. Their timing was as good as professionals and they would swim their way through the dance and their movements were as smooth as silk and would flow like pure water in lush springs.



The writer with Mohsin and Kausar, the Atan Duo in Matanzas, Cuba

And now I get back to the real story of the invitation that took me down memory lane. I reached there at around 9:00 p.m. It was almost a full moon that night and some friends of the host were already sitting there on Qaleens (Rugs).

It was a typical 'all male' gathering, typical for any Pukhtoon party or wedding gathering. where women would tend to remain indoors They hailed from different corners of Pakistan, including Zhob, Chaman, Muslim Bagh, Quetta, Loralai, Peshawar, Waziristan, Bannu, Hangu, Kohat, Malakand, Darra Adam Khel, and Charsadda, to name a few. They belonged to different tribes, namely, the Afridi, Kakar, Achakzai, Wazir, Dawar, Bangash and Khattak. Soon the Pukhtoon music started and some of boys started to dance Atan. The crowd clapped, as more boys joined the dance.

It seemed as if they all had natural talent for Atan. The movements came natural to them and they danced with compassion and serenity. Surprisingly, the Pukhtoos being classified as a warrior race but none was found to be aggressive and they all were as civilized as they could be. Or was it because most of them were M. Phil or PhD students at the university?

Dinner was served around 12:15 a.m. which, of course, comprised of a goat sacrificed earlier and Nan (Fine) and about 40 of us sat down and ate solemnly. As soon as the dinner was over, they all rose and were ready to dance again. It was already 12:45 a.m. when I had to beg leave with a consideration in my mind that I happen to be the only non-Pukhtoon among these fierce yet extremely hospitable people who can even die while defending the honor of their guests.

Notes:

¹ Pukhtoon / Pushtoon are both commonly used terms to define the Pathan

² *The lonely planet*, Pakistan, John King, Bradley Mayhew, David St. Vincent, 5th edition, July 1998.

³ *ibid*

⁴ A flute which is played sideways

⁵ *ibid*

Our Traditional Educational Systems

By Asad Zaman

In *Orientalism*, one of the most significant and influential books of the twentieth century, Edward Said describes how the European project of colonizing the rest of the world distorted all academic knowledge produced about the East (the Orient). The necessity of justifying and providing a moral basis for the loot and plunder of Asia, Africa and the Americas led to the invention of a large number of Western theories which made it impossible to achieve an objective understanding of the East. Imperialism and exploitation were cloaked under the noble objective of the White Man's burden to spread the benefits of his civilization to the rest of the world. The extremely cruel treatment of blacks (leading to an estimated 10 million slaves taken out and about a 100 million killed in the process, over the period of European colonization of Africa), was justified by the invention of racism: according to a US court ruling Negroes were "beings of an inferior order ... they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

The superiority complex of the West described in *Orientalism* has a natural counterpart in the inferiority complex in the East. The colonial educational system was designed by Macaulay, who expressed his extreme contempt for our heritage in his famous Minute on Indian education: "(no one) could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." Those who absorb this message embedded in Western education, write fiction and essays demeaning and insulting to their own families, culture, country and religion. European superiority becomes an article of faith to those trained to be "Indian in color, but English in taste" and criticisms such as the present one invoke an irritated defense combined with the platitude that if Europeans are bad, we and our ancestors are even worse. To overcome this inferiority complex, we need to learn that the common bonds of humanity that we all share are much stronger than petty differences created by race, nation, ideology and language.

This essay was motivated by a recent article in a leading newspaper contending that "public education began in our subcontinent with the advent of British rule. Before that, no such system existed." This perpetuates the European myth that we were all ignorant savages and barbarians before the White Man came to educate

and civilize us. The facts are so breathtakingly at variance with this picture that they will come as a shock to the average reader. The educational system of India was one of the wonders of the world and people from many lands came to India in search of knowledge and wisdom. A contemporary account from pre-British India states that while excellent scholars are present everywhere in India, Delhi can be especially proud of the vast assortment of world class experts in every field of knowledge as well as trade and craft. Among both Muslims and Hindus it was a religious duty to support scholars and to free them from worldly worries so they could concentrate on the acquisition of knowledge. Scholars could and did travel the country in search of knowledge without financial constraints, since they could count on hospitality wherever they went. Private and public libraries galore, books, copyists, authors, public debates, intellectual competitions of many types, testify to a widespread culture of learning, where even courtesans boasted of literary accomplishments.

This culture survived into the early periods of colonial rule: William Dalrymple writes that “He [the Muslim man] who holds an office worth twenty rupees a month commonly gives his sons an education equal to that of a prime minister. ... After seven years of study, the young Muhammadan ... [is nearly the equal of] ... a young man raw from Oxford.” Research on madrasas in early colonial British India shows that: “The syllabus employed at the Nizamia madrasas, which served as a model for madrasas elsewhere, represented a blend of *naqli ‘ulum* (revealed sciences), including the *Quran*, the *hadith*, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *tafsir* (Quranic commentary), on the one hand, and the *aqli ‘ulum* (rational sciences), including Arabic language, grammar, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, physics and mathematics, on the other.”

Our educational systems were destroyed by deliberate British policy, which seized numerous endowments (*Awqaf*) set up for educational purposes, and denied jobs to all but those trained in the newly setup British educational systems. The destruction was so thorough that not only the educational institutions but the cultural traditions and even the memory of these institutions were lost:

I lament the loss of the treasures of the traveler.

I mourn the loss of the sense of loss. Iqbal (free translation)

The British educational system was explicitly designed to create intermediaries between the ruling class and the public; in effect, a method of producing bureaucrats and clerks, not scholars. The greatest loss from the introduction of this system has been the transformation of the concept of education as a sacred duty which leads to spiritual transformation and enlightenment, to education as means of acquiring a job.

This problem can only be fixed by reverting to our traditions. In her book *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality*, Harvard Professor Julie Reuben has described how universities in the USA abandoned their mission to build character and develop morals, opting for a purely technical education. It was not illiterate savages, but graduates of the finest educational systems of the West who designed the gas chambers used to burn millions of innocent men, women and children in Germany. David Halberstam in his book, *The Brightest and the Best*, has documented how graduates of Yale and Harvard ran the Vietnam War on the pattern of an efficient business, with callous disregard for human suffering: more than one million civilians died as “collateral damage” in the mass bombings and napalming, and atrocities and massacres were common. Ph.D. physicists who developed the nuclear bomb denied any responsibility for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Leading biologists work for salaries to develop non-fertile varieties of genetically engineered high yield grains so that multinationals can profit from the hunger of humanity. The value of technical expertise is lost if the expert will stuff his pockets at the expense of the public at every opportunity. There is substantial evidence to show that the greed of highly educated financial wizards is responsible for the current global financial crisis. There is a vital need to re-learn and revive our heritage in education, which emphasized character, integrity, honesty and morality in addition to the development of competence in specialized subjects.

An Excerpt from *Burnt Shadows: A Novel*

By Kamila Shamsie

PROLOGUE

Once he is in the cell they unshackle him and instruct him to strip. He takes off the grey winter coat with brisk efficiency and then— as they watch, arms folded— his movements slow, fear turning his fingers clumsy on belt buckle, shirt buttons.

They wait until he is completely naked before they gather up his clothes and leave. When he is dressed again, he suspects, he will be wearing an orange jumpsuit.

The cold gleam of the steel bench makes his body shrivel. As long as it's possible, he'll stand.

How did it come to this, he wonders.

THE YET UNKNOWING WORLD

Nagasaki, 9 August 1945

Later, the one who survives will remember that day as grey, but on the morning of 9 August itself both the man from Berlin, Konrad Weiss, and the schoolteacher, Hiroko Tanaka, step out of their houses and notice the perfect blueness of the sky, into which white smoke blooms from the chimneys of the munitions factories.

Konrad cannot see the chimneys themselves from his home in Minamiyamate, but for months now his thoughts have frequently wandered to the factory where Hiroko Tanaka spends her days measuring the thickness of steel with micrometers, images of classrooms swooping into her thoughts the way memories of flight might enter the minds of broken-winged birds. That morning, though, as Konrad slides open the doors that form the front and back of his small wooden caretaker's house and looks in the direction of the smoke he makes no attempt to

imagine the scene unfolding wearily on the factory floor. Hiroko has a day off--a holiday, her supervisor called it, though everyone in the factory knows there is no steel left to measure. And still so many people in Nagasaki continue to think Japan will win the war. Konrad imagines conscripts sent out at night to net the clouds and release them in the morning through factory chimneys to create the illusion of industry.

He steps on to the back porch of the house. Green and brown leaves are scattered across the grass of the large property, as though the area is a battlefield in which the soldiers of warring armies have lain down, caring for nothing in death but proximity. He looks up the slope towards Azalea Manor; in the weeks since the Kagawas departed, taking their household staff with them, everything has started to look rundown. One of the window shutters is partly ajar; when the wind picks up it takes to banging against the sill. He should secure the shutter, he knows, but it comforts him to have some sound of activity issuing from the house.

Azalea Manor. In '38 when he stepped for the first time through its sliding doors into a grand room of marble floor and Venetian fireplace it was the photographs along the wall that had captured his attention rather than the mad mixture of Japanese and European architectural styles: all taken in the grounds of Azalea Manor while some party was in progress, Europeans and Japanese mixing uncomplicatedly. He had believed the promise of the photographs and felt unaccustomedly grateful to his English brother-in-law James Burton who had told him weeks earlier that he was no longer welcome at the Burton home in Delhi with the words, "There's a property in Nagasaki. Belonged to George--an eccentric bachelor uncle of mine--who died there a few months ago. Some Jap keeps sending me telegrams asking what's to be done with it. Why don't you live there for a while? As long as you like." Konrad knew nothing about Nagasaki--except, to its credit, that it was not Europe and it was not where James and Ilse lived-- and when he sailed into the harbour of the purple-roofed city laid out like an amphitheatre he felt he was entering a world of enchantment. Seven years later much of the enchantment remains--the glassy loveliness of frost flowers in winter, seas of blue azaleas in summer, the graceful elegance of the Euro-Japanese buildings along the seafront--but war fractures every view. Or closes off the view completely. Those who go walking in the hills have been warned against looking down towards the shipyard where the battleship *Musashi* is being built under such strict secrecy that heavy curtains have been constructed to block its view from all passersby.

Functional, Hiroko Tanaka thinks, as she stands on the porch of her house in Urakami and surveys the terraced slopes, the still morning alive with the whirring of cicadas. If there were an adjective to best describe how war has changed

Nagasaki, she decides, that would be it. Everything distilled or distorted into its most functional form. She walked past the vegetable patches on the slopes a few days ago and saw the earth itself furrowing in mystification: why potatoes where once there were azaleas? What prompted this falling-off of love? How to explain to the earth that it was more functional as a vegetable patch than a flower garden, just as factories were more functional than schools and boys were more functional as weapons than as humans.

An old man walks past with skin so brittle Hiroko thinks of a paper lantern with the figure of a man drawn on to it. She wonders how she looks to him, or to anyone. To Konrad. Just a gaunt figure in the drabest of clothes like everyone else, she guesses, recalling with a smile Konrad's admission that when he first saw her--dressed then, as now, in white shirt and grey monpe--he had wanted to paint her. Not paint a portrait of her, he added quickly. But the striking contrast she formed with the lush green of the Kagawas' well-tended garden across which she had walked towards him ten months ago made him wish for buckets of thick, vibrant paint to pour on to her, waterfalls of colour cascading from her shoulders (rivers of blue down her shirt, pools of orange at her feet, emerald and ruby rivulets intersecting along her arms).

"I wish you had," she said, taking his hand. "I would have seen the craziness beneath the veneer much sooner." He slipped his hand out of hers with a glance that mixed apology and rebuke. The military police could come upon them at any moment.

The man with the brittle skin turns to look back at her, touching his own face as if trying to locate the young man beneath the wrinkles. He has seen this neighbourhood girl--the traitor's daughter--several times in the last few months and each time it seems that the hunger they are all inhabiting conspires to make her more beautiful: the roundness of her childhood face has melted away completely to reveal the exquisiteness of sharply angled cheekbones, a mole resting just atop one of them. But somehow she escapes all traces of harshness, particularly when, as now, her mouth curves up on one side, and a tiny crease appears just millimetres from the edge of the smile, as though marking a boundary which becomes visible only if you try to slip past it. The old man shakes his head, aware of the foolishness he is exhibiting in staring at the young woman who is entirely unaware of him, but grateful, too, for something in the world which can still prompt foolishness in him.

The metallic cries of the cicadas are upstaged by the sound of the air siren, as familiar now as the call of insects. The New Bomb! the old man thinks, and turns to hurry away to the nearest air-raid shelter, all foolishness forgotten.

Hiroko, by contrast, makes a sharp sound of impatience. Already, the day is hot. In the crowded air-raid shelters of Urakami it will be unbearable--particularly under the padded air-raid hoods which she views with scepticism but has to wear if she wants to avoid lectures from the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Association about setting a poor example to the children. It is a false alarm--it is almost always a false alarm. The other cities of Japan may have suffered heavily in aerial raids, but not Nagasaki. A few weeks ago she repeated to Konrad the received wisdom that Nagasaki would be spared all serious damage because it was the most Christian of Japan's cities, and Konrad pointed out that there were more Christians in Dresden than in Nagasaki. She has started to take the air-raid sirens a little more seriously ever since. But really, it will be so hot in the shelter. Why shouldn't she just stay at home? It is almost certainly a false alarm.

Why risk it? Konrad thinks. He retrieves his air-raid hood from inside the house and starts to walk swiftly towards the shelter which the Kagawas had built in the back garden. Halfway across the garden he stops and looks at the wall which divides the property from the vacated lot next door. He hasn't checked on his birds, on the other side of the wall, since the last rain shower. Tossing the air-raid hood on the grass, he strides to the boundary wall and hoists himself over it, slinging his body low to reduce the chances of being seen by passers-by or the military police.

If anyone were to see him they would think he looked ridiculous--a gangling European tumbling over a wall, all arms and legs and hooded eyes, with hair and close-cropped beard of a colour so unexpected in Nagasaki that Hiroko Tanaka had thought, the first time she saw him, that the hair of Europeans rusted rather than greyed as they aged. Later she discovered that he was only twenty-nine--eight years older than she was.

The dry grass crackles beneath his feet--he feels as though he is snapping the backs of tiny creatures--as he walks across to the giant camphor tree to which the birds are fastened, rotating slowly in the faint breeze. It is Hiroko who first referred to his purple notebooks as birds--the day they met; the only time she has been inside his house. She lifted a notebook off his desk, splayed, and glided it around his room. The animation of her touch made him acutely conscious of the lifelessness of his words: sentences thrown down on paper year after year simply so he could pretend there was some purpose to his being here, some excuse for cowering in a world from which he felt so separate that nothing in it could ever implicate him.

But ever since Germany's surrender shifted his status in Nagasaki from that of ally into some more ambiguous state which requires the military police to watch him closely the lifeless words have become potent enough to send him to

prison. It says all there is to say about the paranoia of Imperial Japan: notebooks of research and observation about the cosmopolitan world that had briefly existed within a square mile of where he now lives are evidence of treason. Yoshi Watanabe made that clear to him when Germany's surrender started to seem imminent. You write about a Nagasaki filled with foreigners. You write about it longingly. That's one step away from cheering on an American occupation. And so, the night Germany surrendered, Konrad constructed a mobile of strong wire and hung each of his eight purple-leather notebooks from it. He climbed over the wall to the vacant property that adjoined his own, and attached the mobile to a tree. The wind twirled the purple-winged birds in the moonlight.

He remains certain that no one will think to enter the deserted garden to search for treachery amidst the leaves. The people who would willingly sift through every particle of dust in a house for signs of anti-state activity can always be deceived by a simple act of imagination.

Ducking beneath a low swooping branch, he reaches out a hand and finds the leather books dry and unmarked, though slightly faded. He looks gratefully up at the protective canopy of leaves before noticing the white streak on one of the leather covers: a real bird's comment on these purple impostors. His face breaks into one of those smiles which sometimes fool people into thinking him handsome. As he steps away from the tree his attention shifts to the slightly deranged tone that has crept into the mournful call of the air-raid siren. Not much point dropping a bomb here, Konrad thinks, making his way without haste back to Azalea Manor's air-raid shelter. The former Foreign Settlement where he lives is characterised now by absence, and always by waste. In Urakami ten families could live in this space! Hiroko said the first time they met, gesturing at Azalea Manor. And she followed it with: The rich! Ridiculous! before turning to ask him what he intended to pay her for the translation work he was requesting.

Weeks later, he accused her, laughingly, of driving up her price by playing on his guilt. Well, of course, she said, with characteristic frankness; scruples and starvation don't go well together. Then she spread her arms wide and scrunched her eyes shut as though concentrating hard on conjuring up another world: When the war's over, I'll be kind. Opening her eyes, she added quietly, Like my mother. He couldn't help thinking her mother would never have approved of starting up a romance with a German, or even walking alone with him through the hills of Nagasaki. It discomfited him to know his happiness was linked to the death of her mother, but then she took his hand and he doubted that anyone, even a revered mother, could have told Hiroko Tanaka what to do. Why should rules of conduct be

the only things untouched by war, she once asked him? Everything from the past is passed.

Kicking the air-raid hood on the ground before him he enters the capacious shelter built into the slope of Azalea Manor's garden. The air musty and tinged with bitterness. Here, the deck of cards with which he and Yoshi Watanabe and Keiko Kagawa kept each other distracted, particularly useful during the early days of the air-raid sirens when there was more terror than boredom associated with the warnings; here, the oak chair from which Kagawa-san surveyed the behaviour of his neighbours and family and staff during those rare occasions when the air-raid sirens found him still at home; here, the hopscotch squares which Konrad had drawn in the dust for the younger Kagawa children; here, the hidden bottle of sake which the cook thought no one else knew about; here, the other hidden bottle of sake which the teenage Kagawas came in search of late at night when the shelter was empty. They knew Konrad could see them from his caretaker's house, but while their parents might still be uneasy after seven years about quite how to negotiate their relationship with the landlord who folded his lanky frame into the tiny house at the bottom of the garden the younger Kagawas knew him as an ally and would have happily welcomed him into their drinking parties if he had shown any inclination to join them.

Now all the Kagawas cross over to the other side of the road if they see him walking towards them. One round of questioning by the military police about the suspect loyalties of their landlord was all it had taken to move them out of Azalea Manor.

Konrad sits on Kagawa-san's oak chair, bouncing his air-raid hood on his knee. He is so immersed in what was that it takes him a moment to realise that the figure which appears in the entrance to the shelter, hood in hand, exists in present tense. It is Yoshi Watanabe.

As if asking for permission to enter a private party, Yoshi says, in English, "May I come in? I'll understand if you say no."

Konrad doesn't respond, but as Yoshi mutters a word of apology and starts to walk away, Konrad calls out, "Don't be an idiot, Joshua. How'd you think I'd feel if a bomb landed on you?"

Yoshi steps inside, looping his spectacles over his ears and blinking rapidly. "I'm not sure."

Picking up the deck of cards, he kneels on the ground, shuffling the cards and then dealing ten each to himself and the empty space across from him.

Yoshi Watanabe is the "Jap" whose telegrams James Burton had referred to when packing Konrad off to Nagasaki. His grandfather, Peter Fuller of Shropshire,

had been George Burton's closest friend and neighbour. When Konrad arrived in Nagasaki it was Yoshi who was waiting at the harbour to welcome him, Yoshi who showed him around Azalea Manor, Yoshi who found him a Japanese tutor, Yoshi who produced the Kagawas as though they were a bouquet of flowers hiding within his sleeve within hours of hearing Konrad say he'd be far more comfortable living in the cosiness of the caretaker's house, Yoshi who regaled him with stories of Nagasaki's turn-of-the-century cosmopolitan world, unique in Japan--its English-language newspapers, its International Club, its liaisons and intermarriages between Europe an men and Japanese women. And when Konrad said he needed someone to translate Japanese letters for the book he was planning to write about the cosmopolitan world, it was Yoshi who had introduced him to his nephew's German teacher, Hiroko Tanaka.

It was one of those friendships which quickly came to seem inevitable, and unbreakable. And then in a conversation of less than a minute, it ended.

They come increasingly to check on me, Konrad. My mother's family name was Fuller. You know what that means. I can't give them any other reason to think I have divided loyalties. Until the war ends, I'm staying away from all the Westerners in Nagasaki. But only until the war ends. After, after, Konrad, things will be as before.

If you had been in Germany, Joshua, you'd say to your Jewish friends: I'm sorry I can't hide you in my attic, but come over for dinner when the Nazi government falls.

"Why are you here?"

Yoshi looks up from the fan of cards in his hand.

"I was at home when the sirens started. This is the nearest shelter." At Konrad's raised eyebrow he adds, "I know. I've been going to the school house's shelter these last few weeks. But with this New Bomb . . . I didn't want to risk the extra minutes out in the open."

"So there are risks in the world greater than being associated with a German? That's comforting. What New Bomb?"

Yoshi puts down his cards.

"You haven't heard? About Hiroshima? Three days ago?"

"Three days? No one's spoken to me in three days." In the shelter at Urakami, Hiroko is packed in so tightly between her neighbours she cannot even raise a hand to wipe the sweat damping her hairline. It hasn't been so crowded in here since the early days of the air-raid sirens. What could have provoked the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Association into such a frenzy about rounding up everyone

in his path and ordering them to the shelter? She exhales through her mouth and turns her head slightly towards the Chair-man's wife, who responds by turning quickly away from Hiroko. It is impossible to know if this is guilt or disdain.

The Chairman's wife had been a close friend of Hiroko's mother--she recalls the two of them giggling together over the newest edition of *Sutairu*, in the days before war brought an end to the magazine: no place in war time Japan for a publication that advised women on the etiquette of wearing underwear with Western dresses. As she was dying, Hiroko's mother had called the Chairman's wife to her bedside with a single request: protect my husband against himself. There was even less place in war time Japan for an iconoclastic artist than for magazines about modern girls. For a long time, the Chairman's wife had carried out her promise, persuading her husband to regard Matsui Tanaka's outbursts against the military and the Emperor as a symbol of a husband's mourning that was so profound it had unhinged him. But in the spring, Matsui Tanaka had been walking past a neighbourhood house and saw the cherry blossom festooning it to commemorate the sacrifice of the fifteen-year-old boy who had died in a kamikaze attack. Without saying a word to Hiroko who was walking silently beside him Matsui Tanaka darted forward, pulling out a book of matches from the pocket of his trousers, and set fire to the cherry blossom.

Seconds later he lay bloodied on the ground, the dead boy's father struggling against the neighbourhood men who had finally decided to restrain him, and Hiroko, bending down over her father, found herself pulled up by the Chairman's wife....

Escape on Ferozpur Road

By Saadia Zahra Gardezi

It is Monday. I try to tell you about my escape.

My grandmother's house is built on the corner of one of the busiest streets of Lahore. Nights that I spend here are often sleepless as she likes to leave lights on throughout the house. I try to find simple and effective ways to escape. So I stand in my mother's former bedroom and look out her window onto the street. It's 3 am. I stare out at the trucks rolling by on Ferozpur Road. I put my hands onto the windowpane and feel the vibrations of this grand causeway. For a few seconds, my mind hears Lahore's diabetic frequency.

There's an epidemic in the city. I try to speak of the common *Lahori* and not all countrymen for reasons I don't know. We *Lahori's* are addicted to our cellular phones. The poorer we are, the more phone calls we seem to receive and the more we get to hear the happiest Indian songs when we answer the phone. It's not about telecom being cheap or frivolous entertainment that peasants and princes are glued to cellular chips; it's all about the momentary fragmented escape. So call me, my ringtone is Lahore's song.

It has been four days since anyone has called me. No five actually. It's 3 am; the new day is here. Since the 27th of September I have sent a total of eight text messages. I also went to a wedding, where I made small talk about clothes, the weather and the dreadful sugar crisis gripping the stores of Lahore. Today, I'll have tea at noon with some of my mother's friends. I hope they talk about sugar as well. My dialogue is well-rehearsed.

I also need to talk to someone I might never meet; it relaxes me, there is no pressure... Hello instant web messenger. How have you been today? What is your favorite flavor? Strawberry? Mine too. Such lies.

It is Monday. I stare at cement carrying trucks at night. It is Tuesday. I lie in my driveway at 10 pm and try to see the stars through the November haze that grips Lahore and makes it hard to breathe. It is Wednesday. I stare at the progress bar of my download manager, watching the download speed change the time left, second by second. It is Thursday. I close my economics textbook, wait for 4 am to happen when I'm sure everyone's asleep and light up in my bathroom with the

exhaust fan on. It is Friday. I come back from a family dinner and try not to think about why the boy I like couldn't like me back and think about him for two hours while listening to the music we used to listen to: Nusrat Fateh Ali's duet with Eddie Vedder and soundtracks to American shows. It is Saturday. I have my period; I have an excuse to mope. I sit in the dark and fantasize about dying, hospitals, and anorexia. It is Sunday. My baby sister falls asleep in my bed, and I stare at her for an hour, marvelling at how tiny the pores of her skin are.

Mornings are hard. We eat at night, we dance at night, we sleep at night, we meet at night, we stay at home because we are conservative at night, we get high at night, we sit with ourselves and get to know ourselves at night. Daytime comes, and I take three exams in one day. It was morning when my aunt bled to death in the hospital. My cook, bless his *ghee*-laden soul, slipped on a *paratha* and broke his hip. It was high noon when my best friend's boyfriend decided to drown in his own bath tub. Do you ever remember Lahore being bombed in the middle of the night?

There is a story in here somewhere; I am trying to say what I need to say. Lahore, I love you. But let me escape for more than just a few moments at a time.

Nirala is closing down. *Nirala* had the best sweets I have ever had.

He has stopped talking to me; he is never online anymore. He also had the best sweets I have ever had. It should be a crime to make a *Lahori* so used to something and then take it away. I replace *mithai* with chocolate. I'll replace all the *hes* with a husband. It is the wedding season; those who can't choose, wait to be chosen. It is most perverse. This is not the story I want to tell. It would be self-defeating. Like the cramped supermarkets, the decadence of the drawing rooms, the fake accents and millions of rupees spent sending you to Georgetown and me to St. Andrews, the *Karachite* making fun of you, the rude beggars of the posh Defense Housing Authority where the military has sold its land to civilians, the security barriers off *Sherpao* bridge, the seven overlapping *aazans* five times a day, the children on the street without shoes, the obnoxious empty towering buildings sprinkled all over you, the men on the street scratching themselves nonchalantly, the bus driver spitting out the window onto your feet, the officers gone for Friday prayers while you wait for two hours, the extra tuition fees to make up for the inadequacy of schools. Survival in the face of defeat. Yet, Lahore is vibrant, historical, rich and blessed by the Sufis. I need to escape to my bathroom to have a smoke. I am not a smoker.

In Lahore for 21 years, I have never touched the *Minar-e-Pakistan* monument. As a child I was awestruck by it, reading about it in Urdu and in Pakistan Studies textbooks. Then one day, on the way to Islamabad, I drove past it. It was small and out of place--a colonized columnar minaret. It symbolized escape, but

it was conflicted and trapped. A planned coincidence that it stands there, like a concrete dandelion, symbol of our freedom. They soon built a better escape out of Lahore, so I don't have to see the monument again. It's a highway that ignores everything on the sides.

So I go blind. I refuse. I stop thinking about *mithai* at *Eid*. I turn off the Wi-Fi. No one calls anyway. I delete any nostalgia producing music. I stop comparing *Minar-e-Pakistan* to *Data Darbar* mosque's magnificence. I stop listening to the man with a beard, on nine channels of cable television. I stop listening to the 25 anchormen all telling me Lahore is burning. I nod my head at whatever my mother says. I am left with myself, and I have no way to get away from me.

It is Monday again. I try to tell you about my escape.

A Half-Rhymed Tale of a Punjabi Girl

By Rizwan Akhtar

I

Since the last harvest
they dispatched the matchmaker
to all the neighbouring villages
to find a groom for their only daughter—
pampered and poked
as if a cotton-stuffed doll,
not knowing that marriage
is not a mystic's scroll
they named her after a *sufi*
like a tree of popular
she grew lean
but her butter-giggling complexion,
remained clean
under the blistering sun
she stood tall
and plastered cow-dung cakes
on the courtyard's wall
fed brown buffalo
churned it
with her hennaed hands,
lips burnt with red colour
and golden trinkets sang
at every stroke
the black braid went mad
as if preparing her for an epic match
she rolled *Rotis*
but mother rebuked her
for her poor kitchen skills

threatened that she would have a
pock-marked meddling mother-in-law
would throttle her all
with the help of a jibing sister-in-law
but that was a motherly petting
in rural Punjabi setting
that smelled of butter and spinach
and *desi* ghee
fried in a clayed pot
with womanly glee—
Rabia's father had unsettled nights,
he opened his till
flattered the matchmaker for her skill,
who came wrapped in a white *chaddar*
like a ghost from the dead
brought magnificent details
of grooms and lands
halcyons bridal plans
but nothing went Rabia's way,
she grew and grew
ripened like mangoes
until the juice oozed out
the stone began to mould,
grey hair appeared
she plucked it
with Punjabi moan,
her mother cursed their fall
but consoled all
and deposited motherly grief
in her shawl,
one by one she caressed her dowry
and sobbed with each golden jewel.

II

Twelve winters and summers left,
old trees doddered
new bloomed
the brown buffalo was doomed

her udders shrunk like berries,
 edgy and alone,
 her bucket boomed,
 she snivelled in the nights,
 when stars made a gallant stride
 the growls of jackals and dogs
 restrained her flights,
 till her school mate
 read her palm again
 said that her groom would be tall
 would twirl his moustache
 give her hundreds buffaloes
 seven sons and many halls
 but nobody called.

III

The morning *azan* echoed,
 she wiped her tears
 and reveries
 with her *duppata*,
 unrolled the prayer mat
 prayed and prayed,
 until a distant relative came
 revealed the mystical links of her name
 after that, went all the strain
 'A woman not made for marriage'
 she heard the resonance
 and alphabets clogged her brain,
 that began with *Alif*
 but cryptically
 the *Molbi* had explained.
 While her playmate
 went through travail for years,
 stripped acacia in the courtyard
 brought her to tears
 but her cow gave two shivering calves
 her father danced
 with grandfatherly laugh,

they gave free food,
boys wearing white caps
came and recited holy names,
she fixed their faulty Arabic tastes,
the father and mother
became prayer-mates,
in-between came a change
the Punjabi wench
was tamed,
and outcame another name,
they called her *Bibi*
this brought her new fame,
beads and chaplets
from the holy lands
were brought
the tales of marriage
were rolled off
rural wedding couplets
were tempered with devotional songs
the black braid turned into grey mane
the matchmaker disappeared
the acacia looked weird
but to sparrows she threw grains,
prayed for timely rains
and greater holy gains.

The King Buzzard: Bano Qudsia's *Raja Gidh*

Translated from Urdu by Masood A. Raja

Translator's Note

Bano Qudsia is, without a doubt, one of the leading figures of post-Partition Urdu literature in Pakistan. In her long career, she has published about thirty major works of fiction and many of her plays have been produced to critical acclaim for Pakistan television. Yet, despite her fame and accomplishments in the Urdu literary circles, she remains unknown in the metropolitan cultures both in academia and in the popular realm due to lack of English translations of her work. Published in 1981, *Raja Gidh*, her most important novel, was an instant success and received wide critical reception both in India and Pakistan. The purpose of this brief translated excerpt is to introduce the English reading audience to the richness and sophistication of Bano Qudsia's craft. I do understand that it is almost impossible to transport the true beauty of her work and especially her mastery of Urdu idiom in English, but this attempt, imperfect as it may be, will be fruitful if it is able to at least introduce Qudsia's work to an English reading audience.

Raja Gidh, like all of Qudsia's work, is a complex novel. The novel's primary diegesis concerns the struggles of its main character, Qayum, while its secondary diegesis deals with the expulsion of the buzzards from the kingdom of birds. Thus, while Qayum goes through various stages of self-seeking in the main plot, the secondary plot provides the details of the trial of the King Buzzard. The main plot of the novel seeks to unravel the mystery of human madness. Qudsia suggests that there are two kinds of human madness: the constructive and the destructive, and it is the wisdom to know the difference between the two that makes one fully human. The main plot thus, through the interaction of its characters, charts the various reasons for human madness: unrequited love, unending search, fear of death, and so on.

The novel also deals with the question of right and wrong in terms of how we earn our living. Qudsia posits the idea that what we feed our children determines to some extent what kind of people they turn out to be. So, if the parents earn their living through corrupt means, the children end up paying the price. This concept

was the main reason that the novel was selected to be one of the texts required for the Pakistani civil services exam. Yet another aspect of the novel that garnished a lot of criticism is its treatment of human sexuality. For the Urdu readers, Qudsia's exploration of human sexuality and its connection with human nature and spirit was quite shocking at first, but it is never used gratuitously and ultimately is seen as a component to the development of a spiritual self.

The following excerpts are an attempt by the translator to introduce Qudsia's work. I have tried to stay as close as possible to the original text and have only strayed away from it at times to make the reading more accessible to the English reader.

• • •

Part One
Evening

Unrequited Love

It was an October day—large, fluffy, and white like fresh popcorn. The previous few days had been as hot as a kiln, but this particular day was cool, expansive, and huge. Some days have the capacity to defy clocks and move at their own pace. It was the first day of our Masters class in sociology. The girls sat in the front row. *She was the best of those Chulistani gazelles.* Professor Suhail looked at her and said: "Please introduce yourself."

We had all been speculating about her name, since the day of registration. She rose, rested her hand on her chair like a biker leaning against a motorcycle, and said:

"Sir, my name is Seemi Shah; I graduated from Kinniard College with a Bachelors in psychology and history."

These were the first formal introductions. Farzana, Angela, Tayyiba, and Kausar had already introduced themselves. The first three came across as the kind of girls who had obtained their degrees by cramming pulp notes, and whose general knowledge and academic potential was mostly bookish. But Kausar Habib and Seemi Shah were the eyes of our class: glittering, bright, enticing. Kausar Habib, however, hesitated after impressing you; she would concede right when she was about to conquer. Her body and mind flickered like a light with intermittent power flow.

But Seemi Shah?

Well, she was a product of Gulberg's suburban society. This particular day she was clad in tight jeans and a white cotton kurta. A necklace hung from her neck, touching her midriff. She had a canvas bag on her shoulder, which probably contained some money, lipstick, tissue paper, a diary with certain phone numbers and people's birthdays inscribed in it. She probably also had a few expensive pens, which were useless for want of ink, so she borrowed others' ball-points to take her notes. Her hair was reddish black, and was ablaze on this glorious October day. She was sitting immediately in front of me, so close that, had I dared, I could have reached out and touched her finely tended hair, but the view of her bodice and her bra straps, through her thin kurta, terrified me far more than a loaded gun could have ever had.

Aftab was first in the boy's row to introduce himself after Seemi Shah. He stood up slowly, a replica of American film icons, illuminating, rhythmic, warm. He spoke in a baritone: "I am Aftab Batt, and, as you already know, I am a graduate of this very college."

Professor Suhail removed his glasses and said: "Well, your classmates don't."

On this Aftab first looked at the girl's row, then whirled to the boys like a discus thrower and said: "I was the president of student union last year; my majors were psychology and sociology. If I had not been so in love with myself and the movies, I could have probably topped the Bachelors exams. But I am not doleful about it. In fact, the girl who got the first position borrowed my notes to study. My reputation, however, is thankfully intact through God's grace and my fear of my parents."

The whole class laughed. Someone yelled: "Self trumpeter! Self trumpeter!"

Introductions continued. After five girls and fifteen boys had introduced themselves, the classroom air became musty with details of names and personal biographies. The class could have ended there, as people had started yawning, but professor Suhail rose and picked up a piece of chalk from the table. He drew a large-headed, heavily-mustached, thin-torsoed, big-booted figure on the board. Then he adorned this figure with square-framed glasses, gave him outstretched beseeching arms, and wrote beneath it: Dr. Suhail; I will be teaching you sociology.

This comic-figure-drawing professor was only about five to six years older than us, but had the mastery of a lion trainer with a training whip hidden somewhere. He never mastered the functional aspects of teaching, but he was a master at mental judo. Ideological wrestling was his favorite sport, and he loved opening his students' skulls, and was good at closing them immediately if he found them

vacant. He was also skillful at making the taciturn ones speak like parrots, while silencing the ones who went on incessantly like the radio. He spoke freely and encouraged freedom. Nothing shocked him. He knew a lot more than just sociology; in his presence, therefore, the air was free of academic pretensions and the students never stereotyped each other.

After drawing his self-portrait, Professor Suhail, while massaging the back of his neck, perched on the edge of the desk and said: "I am not much older or more experienced than you, but as I am a Bachelor, books are still my first love. Books, so far, have been my main passion. You will certainly ask me some questions the answers to which I will not know. Unfortunately, I am too proud to accept anyone else's intellectual superiority. I therefore warn you that for as long as you are in my class, you should consider me your guru. You may not make much of my knowledge; it could sometimes be quite superficial. You might know more than me, but reminding me of my ignorance will be seriously harmful. It will cause my chest to constrict, I will shave off my whiskers, and my belt might become loose. Who would want me to suffer from such drastic inferiority complex, raise your hand."

No one raised a hand except Aftab.

"Why would you want me to suffer from an inferiority complex, Mr. Aftab?"

"Sir, I think you already have an inferiority complex, so our saying so does not matter at all," replied Aftab.

The whole class laughed, including Professor Suhail, who laughed the loudest.

At this point an invisible triangle was drawn across the classroom space: Aftab held one point, Seemi the other, and professor Suhail stood at the intercepting point of their gaze. Energy flowed amongst these three like the current through a circuit.

As the laughter subsided, Professor Suhail continued: "I own an old motorcycle. If any male student needs it, just ask me for the keys. But whosoever does not return the bike at the promised time will forfeit the right to use it again. If a female student hails me at the bus stop for a lift, I will oblige, but would ask her to get off the bike the moment she tries to tell me where to turn. Now you all can report what you have to share with others."

"Pen" said someone from one corner.

"Bicycle, sometimes."

"Tissue paper, always."

"Notes, after the exams."

"Lipstick," said Seemi Shah.

"Flying kiss," replied Aftab.

“Good, very good,” said professor Suhail. “Now we know that the GNP of our sociology class is quite lofty, we can move on with aplomb. By the way, what do you think of the relation between the individual and society? Individual freedom is important, but do you think the society can survive if absolved of all its responsibilities?”

The professor’s face had suddenly turned as old as his bike: the lecture had commenced.

Professor Suhail was expertly discussing the relationship between the individual and society. He often threw the ball in our court, which we returned using our best intellectual strokes. Pretty soon faces turned crimson, voices became intense, hands started chopping the air, and the girls, who until recently seemed to have been busy in a silent prayer, transformed into a group slashing at an ice slab with pikes. The conversation left the individual and society and traversed far and wide. We compared Sweden, Thailand, Rhodesia, Mexico, and Uganda, sometimes contemplating the powerlessness of individuals, or worrying over the plight of various societies.

Then Seemi Shah asked: “Sir, do you think in an ideal society a person would commit suicide?”

The professor ran his fingers through his thick hair, and then threw the question back at the boys. Having found no useful comment he replied: “In fact, suicide is a symptom. If one were to gauge a society with a social barometer, suicide would be at its highest degree of pressure. But I am sorry to say, Miss Shah, that there is no such research community as yet in which we can perform this experiment. But it is believed that societal pressure causes madness, and madness becomes a cause of suicide.” He, then, went on to expound on Durkheim for quite some time.

We were all at an age when one develops a romantic and spiritual fondness for suicide. We argued about various causes of suicide: economic, social, individual, personal, and essential. As suicide was the effect and not the cause, the conversation soon shifted to mental ailments and insanity. We all agreed that insanity was the real cause of suicide; it was madness that impelled humans to take that last drastic step.

Angela had been silent throughout the discussion, while Farzana, Tayyiba, and Kausar, who had been previously arguing vehemently with Professor Suhail, went suddenly mute when the discussion turned to the cause instead of the effect.

Professor Suhail concluded: “You all have clearly understood the relationship between the individual and the society and have drawn quite apt conclusions. Ms. Farazana is right in suggesting that when the noose of society becomes overly tight around the individual’s neck, the individual takes the tragic step of ending life before the time of natural death. Kausar has explained the reasons for suicide with

the freshness of a true discovery. But now I invite you to contemplate beyond the act of suicide, which you all agree is the ultimate outcome of madness. Think about this aspect, not the suicide itself, but about madness; not the effect, but the cause. What is the real cause of madness? Remember, if madness is so baffling, then its cause must be even more extraordinary.”

Now, the boys jumped into the fray.

One suggested: “There can be two reasons for madness: functional, caused by a birth defect, and psychological.”

“Look deeply for any reasons besides this,” said Professor Suhail.

Aftab had not said a word until then. This Kashmiri boy had remained seated like a decorated birthday gift in its white wrappings. We learned later that when it came to academic discussions, he never wasted words: where a smile sufficed, he would avoid using a word, and if a word was enough he would not waste a sentence, and he preferred brevity over prolixity. He usually spoke in points. He would count his responses on his fingers, one, two, three. He rarely crossed number three; but what he said this day was probably his longest articulation during his entire Masters career.

He rose and stretched his hands outwards like a cross. His arms were covered with hair, like thick golden grass. The light from the window struck his brown eyes and made them sparkle like glittering honey. He looked like an athlete carrying the Olympic torch: beautiful, pure, hallowed. It was at this moment that Seemi made the mistake of looking at him, and was driven mad.

“Madness is caused by unfulfilled desires, sir,” he said. “These desires,” he continued “are caused by the social taboos present in every culture. In the cultures where one can’t marry one’s cousins, the unrequited love of one’s cousin becomes the cause of insanity.”

“Thank you for borrowing from Freud,” Seemi slashed at him in her scissor-like English.

“*Madam*, I have not borrowed this from the Repression Theory; I am speaking of Mir Taqi Mir’s madness, Farhad’s madness. Professor Suhail exposed us to one aspect of madness: suicide and death. I am speaking of the other side of lunacy; the kind of madness that is divine, sacred; the kind of madness that drives one to conquer Mount Everest, or dig a canal of milk¹.”

“Sit down Farhad sahib,” yelled a boy from one corner.

Aftab gave him a fiery look and sat down.

¹ This is a reference to the Persian love poem of “Shireen and Farhad” in which Farhad is given the impossible task of digging a canal and then filling it with milk in order for him to be able to court Shireen.

“That’s a point,” said Professor Suhail, his eyes suddenly luminous. “So, we have reached a conclusion” he continued, “that madness has two kinds, positive and negative. Good, very good. Now, your assignment for this month is to share with me at least one reason for human madness. This reason cannot only be biological, or environmental; it should be completely innovative; it could be some spiritual or mystical idea, but new. The one who comes up with the most insane answer will get the most points.”

The class was in turmoil.

“Madness is caused by only one thing: environment, environment . . .” said someone from a corner.

“No, its biological . . .” yelled another.

“Repression, sir . . .”

“Agree or disagree, but madness is caused by only one thing: *Ishq-e-la-haasil!* Unrequited love, unrequited love, unrequited love,” shouted Aftab, while standing on his chair.

“Order! Order!” roared Professor Suhail. “Friends, my pay increment is at stake here; if you make such a racket, someone will report me to the chancellor and I will be posted to Muzaffargarh.”

The discussion soon became a rudderless ship. One student talked about group marriages and use of hashish, then someone mentioned the western moral decay and the race problem. Everything became worth a shot: the North-African refugee problem in Sweden, Red Indians and their shamans, colonialism and the problems of democracy, Japan’s industrial excellence, the ever unraveling Russian communism etc., etc. But Seemi Shah was speechless—she had been vanquished by Aftab’s idea of unrequited love.

She was a flower of Gulberg; she had studied at Convent schools. In her free time she enjoyed Western music, read *Newsweek* and *Time*, watched American TV shows. Her wardrobe included only a few Shalwar-Kurtas; for her looks, she relied on shampoo, hair spray, colognes, and perfumes. She had never had to wash herself using a mug and a bucket of water; this back-brush-wielding, shower-using daughter of Gulberg was smitten by the inner-city Kashmiri boy, exactly when he was busy announcing: “*Ishq-e-lahaasil!* unrequited love! Unrequited love!”

They had previously exchanged some surreptitious looks. But during this third period, their eyes first became filled with wonder, and then with recognition and finally with understanding. After the class, they both rose in a trance, and, as if under a spell, exited the classroom side by side. Outside, Seemi quietly mounted Aftab’s motorcycle. Aftab never raised an eyebrow. Like in a movie scene, they both slowly faded out on the road.

Three people jolted my being on this day. Aftab, with his Hellenic bearing, was one of them. If he had not been in the class, then probably I could have been the most popular in the class. This induced a special jealousy and ill-will in my heart for him.

The second shock came from Professor Suhail. Previously, I had been accustomed to professors who taught from textbook notes. They all had been teaching from these notes from the beginning of their careers, and would probably retire with the same knowledge; there was no chance of their intellectual growth. They were stuck with the ideas they had started with, and there wasn't much chance for change.

In high school, I was in the care of Master Ghulam Rasul. His beard, his booming voice, and his table were immutable. He carried a cane that he placed on the table the moment he entered the class. His long beard shone with hair coloring. He used to curse us the same way the policemen addressed the felons. The volume control in his voice was broken, so he always used the highest notes. As we could not remove his staff, we took our revenge on the table instead. We had carved hundred of curses on the four legs of the table with our compasses. But, despite our abuse, the table never left the classroom. Master Gulam Rasul was quite immovable, too. If he declared that the War of Independence had happened in 1647 CE, then so it was, and no reference to venerable history books could change his mind. Because of his influence, his students were mostly cowards, mean, and unkind to the elderly. He could not accept any criticism of the Mughal kings. All of them, from Babar to Bahadur Shah Zafar, were his heroes. Any criticisms of the Mughals incensed him, and as he could not convince us with his arguments, he drowned us out with his loud, booming voice.

In ninth grade I chanced upon *Tuzk-e-Jahangiri*. I shared the details of the book with my class-mates frequently. Knowing master Ghulam Rasul's veneration of the Mughals, but being young and arrogant, and wanting to impress my classmates further, I decided to ask a question.

"Master Jee," I said, "have you read *Tuzk-e-Jahangiri*?"

"I read it when you still pissed in your pants. Sit down and don't try to impress us with your knowledge!" he replied.

"Master Jee," I ventured again.

"What?"

"There are events recorded in the book suggesting that Jahangir wasn't all that compassionate."

Master Ghulam Rasul smashed his chalk on the table.

“He married Noor Jehan. Isn’t that compassion? Why would a king marry a divorcee? Was there any dearth of virgins? Tell me if this was compassion or not?” He yelled.

Master and I had two different ways of measuring compassion.

“Master Jee, he had one criminal immured in a goat skin and then had the skin sewed shut,” I said.

“Well he was a criminal, not an innocent. Punishment is always for good. Now, when I punish you, does it benefit me or you? Punishments are for the good of the felon,” he roared.

“But Master Jee, how could the one who got sewn up in a goat-skin benefit from the punishment?”

“Sit down! You argue like your older brother. We will talk about Jahangir the Great when you grow a mustache,” he concluded.

He always added, like in Alexander the Great, “the Great” to every Mughal king’s name, and as I was always quite shy about my non-existent mustache, I sat down immediately. But that first attempt at showing off my knowledge started a rebellion in my heart.

That most teachers are usually quite conventional in their ideas is the greatest misfortune of the teaching profession. The teachers love discipline, middle class values, and hardworking students. They teach about unusual people and their accomplishments, people who were nonconformists. Hence, being common themselves, the teachers teach about people whose level of thought they themselves don’t possess. They thrive in making children normal, common, while their educational materials incite the students to be unusual, uncommon. The dropouts do not belong in the school, but they are always lectured about the people who themselves were school dropouts. Every Ghulam Rasul tries to teach normatively to students using works about the geniuses of history, and this is the great tragedy of education: the works of special people in the hands of the ordinary. It was because of this disparity in our educational system that I could never grow tall inside, even though outwardly I had grown taller. Inside, I was like a Bonsai tree, centuries old, yet a pygmy.

I was careful to the point of being impractical. It was all right on an intellectual level, but in real life I was like a lost dog. I needed a guru who could stretch me to make me as tall as him, but I ran into yet another Master Ghulam Rasul after high school.

I met him during the first year of college. Professor Tanvir always smoked imported cigarettes, dressed in spotless three-piece suits, and wore thick power glasses. He was quite erudite, and I was impressed by the depth of his learning. As my early experience was rural, I preferred the feudal system, but he was an ardent

socialist. Theoretically, he attributed all social ills to the uneven distribution of wealth. I quite took to him during my first year, but he turned out to be yet another Master Ghulam Rasul. He was only an academic socialist. His lifestyle was completely feudal, and he could not accept any criticism of his views or his lifestyle.

If any student pointed out a disparity in his views and his real life, he denied them the same freedom of speech that he idealized. It was during the week before the final BA exams, when he was proving his open-mindedness by allowing us to smoke in class, that I asked him a question.

“Sir, there is something I wanted to ask.”

“Oh, keep smoking, we are friends, and ask your question” he said.

“Sir, you tell us every day that capitalism is the root cause of Third World poverty, then why don’t you sell your car and buy a cheap motorcycle?” I asked. I was young then and did not know of the incongruity in people’s words and deeds.

Professor Tanvir’s face turned red. Restraining his anger he said: “This is a totally personal question, sit down. You rural folks lack manners; idiot, if I sell my car then how will I get to college?”

I felt slighted, and could not let go of the discussion. So just to annoy him further, I said: “On a bicycle, sir, just like all the other people.”

“This is the space age, you idiot; time is valuable and you want me to revert to a bike?”

“But sir, China is in the space age, too, but people there . . .”

“You want an intellectual to ride a bike, while the businessmen and mill owners and the nouveau riche travel in their shiny cars? We have carved out a place in this society after years of hard work and struggle and you want us to give it up!” said Professor Tanvir.

“But sir, according to your beliefs society should be classless, so there is no fear of losing one’s place.”

Now the professor was foaming at his mouth and he flailed his arms, shouting, “Sit down, sit down. A frog’s mind cannot contain Marx’s ideas. First learn how to tie your necktie, then we will talk about these things.”

I hid my necktie behind my palm and sat down. Professor Tanvir did not know how to open minds; he was incapable of providing the kind of education that could reduce the difference between words and deeds.

But Professor Suhail wasn’t like an immutable sealed parchment. He was like a slate: you could write, erase, and write again. I was surprised at his love of books; books had been my passion too for a long time. But the books had driven me away from the lighter side of life; I had learned that those who loved books forgot about the lighter aspects of life, and became serious priests in the habit of hitting others with the staff of their learned ideas.

Professor Suahil was different and interesting. All my life had been scarred by Ghulam Rasuls, so I was fascinated by this childlike, simple, and well humored professor. The introductory lesson made me disillusioned about my earlier education. I got bored with Buddha's *Dhamphada* and modern parapsychology. I wished to be a simple slate, so that I could erase what had been inscribed on it earlier to write Professor Suhail's assignments with a new insight, according to his expectations. Even though I had not yet started his assignment, I was already afraid of disappointing him.

After succumbing to Aftab's splendor and Professor Suhail's learning, my third genuflection was to Seemi Shah. It was probably a victory of urban culture over the rural. I had never before seen such a complete urban girl. She transported me to the world of advertisements, on plane fights through clouds. Her accent, dress, manners, and smell all revealed that she was more refined. Now, my pride incited me to break her and drag her to my rural home where she would become a complete village girl. So that her days and nights will be spent, like my mother, churning milk, plying the spinning wheel, and cooking vegetables in large earthen pots. Maybe, every man desires to force a woman from her own chosen path to a course of his choosing.

But Aftab had already left with Seemi on his motorcycle. At that very instant, he was probably giving her, in Urdu, her first lecture about the history of inner city Lahore.



Some people say that the region of Potohar, made up of arid, second rate hills the natives call Pabbian, was once a puissant blue ocean. Then a Yogi, who mediated upon its beaches for three hundred years, taught the ocean to hide. Each wave returned back to the Arabian sea, singing its hymn, *malagan, palagan*, laying bare the submerged barren hills. The geological aspects of these hills still reflect the water marks of the ancient ocean.

Some others say that Potohar was once a thick jungle. The trees in this jungle were so tall and thickly intertwined that even the streams running through it got lost, and the sun-rays never reached to create multicolored whirlpools in their waters. The birds roamed this jungle freely, and even the night-owls could see during the day. Then one night a haunting wind descended from the moon and devastated the forest and dried up the streams. This forest thrived centuries ago in the first age of human civilization, a civilization that had all the knowledge that we now possess.

It was in this first age that the humans traveled to Mars and Jupiter, and invented atomic bombs. When the bowstring of civilization was stretched to its limit, the humans destroyed God's world with their bombs and this forest became a waste land.

This story is of the specific time from the first age of human civilization when humans had not yet used their bombs. There was great fear amongst the dwelling places of animals about this new human innovation. Hence, a conference of the birds was called in the jungle. So many birds came to attend this conference that there wasn't enough room for them to perch.

From Hind Sind came the gray-winged birds in droves. From the hills of Khasi came the red-tailed bulbul and the emerald green pigeon whose orange underwings dazzled the eyes of the beholder. The Bajanga from Katmandu and the eagles from Tibet arrived, having camped several times during their long flight. Not only the African partridges, moor-hens and nightingales made their way to the meeting, but even the birds of prey suspended their activities and flew from America and Australia to the meeting place. Even the Shikra, Baz, and eagles, residents of Central Asia and Russian Turkistan, reached the meeting in the company of the birds of Pamir. The crow, Mynah, quails, woodpeckers, chakoors, and sparrows were natives and their collective votes counted, but their individual opinions were not considered worthy, while the hook-billed, high-flying birds pranced around like the white races. From the basin of River Gagahr and Chatranji came the latoras, chandols, and goghais flying magnificently in battle formations like the fighter planes. The gold-backs, neilkanths and hud-huds chose the tree stumps as their perches. The doves, cuckoos, and chandols were not much interested in the conference, for them it did not matter much if the humans destroyed the world, and had come just to gossip with the denizens of the forest, but were shocked to learn the seriousness of the situation.

A few days before the conference, the air was filled with the disparate opinions of the birds. Everyone was waiting for the President, without whom the meeting could not commence. The reconnaissance party returned from Mount Everest, reporting that they had combed all the mountains—Dhulidar, Nangaparbat, K2, Kanchnaga—but had found no signs of Huma. It was assumed that the world was awaiting the arrival of some powerful king, and Huma was on a VIP tour to help the forces of the universe to choose this king. This supposed tour also became a subject of gossip amongst the birds. Some carnivore birds thought that the end of the world was near, and that it would be brought by human hands. They thought the world needed a pure being to save it from the disaster, and Huma, instead of choosing the king, was searching for this Messiah. Some other birds thought that Huma had become mystical minded, and having announced the vice-regency of man to humans,

had now given up and become a recluse, for every caliph he chose had become a tyrant instead. Huma, thus, had lost hope in humanity and had vowed not to fly over human heads again.

The Owl Jati, who never interfered in others business, did not agree with this opinion. They thought that Huma, because of his narcissistic delusions, had never cared about God's will, and he could only guess desires of a few a few humans. Therefore, whosoever Huma chose as the king became a downfall for his people. The night owls were more interested in observation than speech, and did not express much and waited patiently for Mr. President's arrival.

Even though the Owl Jati leaders had conversed about this within their inner circles, the crows, the inquisitive bastards—an art they had learned from humans—got wind of it. The round eyed owls' secret, thus, was spread to the whole jungle, and the whole jungle resonated with rumors. The crows had always considered Huma a circus clown who had been eternally stubborn and often wrong. Thus when Huma remained absent for a long time, the birds got tired of waiting. The crows were rightly incensed, for they had long lost the habit of residing in the forest; they were, rather, more accustomed to sitting on the house walls eavesdropping on housewives, and this absence of human contact was troubling them.

So every now and then, a few wise, cunning, and cowardly crows would surround the smaller birds and incite them thusly: "Huma is an eternal fool who keeps choosing the kings on the earth. Brothers, every human is a king, whether he sleeps in the manger or on a throne. Huma is stupid and does not understand that every human considers himself the Best-of-all-Beings; those who wear the crown of pride, what need there is to make them kings."

The Peacocks, with their tails spread, kept rehearsing the welcome dance all over the jungle: they were happy for being part of the reception committee. The crows used a different language with the peacocks. "Huma is a different matter; only he will suit the Presidential chair; nothing can be done without Huma as the president."

The empty Presidential chair prompted a search for an alternate to Huma. It was discovered that the mountain from where the ocean had receded—where one could still find oysters shells, snails, scorpions, fish skeletons, and the remains of other sea creatures—was the abode of a Simurgh. No one knew of his exact age. Some birds insisted that he had been a refugee on Baba Noah's arch. Others speculated that he had always lived in the sacred areas—the ones that the Israeli's are now trying to annex—to derive energy from the mosque of Aqsa. The old sea turtles insisted that the Simurgh had lived in the Mediterranean desert, which later was filled with the waters of the Mediterranean ocean.

The Simurgh spent the whole night gazing at the moon to absorb the lunar energy, and spent his days sunbathing in the desert. The dove opined that it was because of Simurgh's powers that Potohar became a jungle: if the lunar energy had not appeared in the Simurg, not even a single wave of water would have receded from Potohar. It was the magnetic energy of lunar power that had forced the waters to rise and fall back into the Arabian sea.

The reclusive Simurg hated the noise, and the company of the denizens of the forest distressed him. He was accustomed to living in the uninhabited lands and eating only what was absolutely necessary to sustain life. But the search party finally found him and having beseeched him in the name of his experience, intelligence, and knowledge convinced him to preside at the conference. Simurgh arrived during the later part of a full moon night. A few moments before his arrival, the sky was shaken with tree-bending winds. The storm-loving birds rose up to reach the skies, while the timid ones hung helplessly with the tree branches. The lightning struck and the land trembled; the bolts of lightning transformed the night into day. Just as the birds were stuck dumb by the ear-shattering noise of thunder and lightning, Simurgh alighted on the fourteen century old banyan tree. The storm subsided as soon as he took his place on the tree. The forest went quiet and the banyan tree glowed in fluorescent light. As soon as the Simurg flapped his wings to accept his new responsibility, the jungle rumbled with a noise like that of the thundering cannons, and the birds feared the coming of an earthquake.

"Why have you called such a huge conference?" asked the Simurgh.

An aggressive Kite left her group and moved briskly forward to answer the question. "Master, we have a serious and complex problem. As you might have noticed, the human of today has become civilized for the first time. He has, with his inventive knowledge, travelled to Mars and Jupiter, but there is also something in human instinct that is a cause of his destruction—madness. It is because of this madness that he has created weapons that can destroy the earth in minutes along with all who live on this sphere. O King of the Birds, we have noticed that some of the birds are also becoming subjects of this madness. We fear that their madness, well, could ultimately become destruction of the world of birds."

"Who is mad, who is mad?" asked all the birds.

The Kite continued "We don't care about the details, Master . . . but no bird has ever gone mad until now. If the birds start going insane like the jackals and the foxes, then what will happen to the life in the jungle . . . the main point is that this madness, like that of the humans, might destroy the world of the birds."

"Who amongst us is mad? Tell, tell!" cried all the birds.

"Friends," the Kite continued, "we don't want to blame anyone, but these days the Gidh Jati has been known to do strange things. For years we have no-

ticed that they eat to the fullest, vomit, and eat again. And in the moonlit nights, they leave the green forests and run in the arid, barren lands like sailboats running against the winds.”

All the birds suddenly looked at the vultures, who were sitting with their beaks tucked under their wings, like so many amnesiacs.

The kite hissed again: “They must be punished, Your Honor, or else we, who resemble them, would be disgraced because of them.”

Simurg, flicked his fluorescent light thrice as an announcement. The whole jungle fell silent. Then he said: “This isn’t as simple as you state. First, we need to know if the vulture Jati’s madness is really of any danger to the bird community; Secondly, we must know the real reason for this madness. If it is essential to their being, then we are helpless, for then it is between them and their maker.

The kites were not interested in discussion; they just desired the banishment of their vulture look-alikes. The eagles and hawks were troubled at this likeness, too, but the kites were hasty and aggressive. The same kite said again, “Master, when humans went mad, no one cared about it, and now they are suffering the consequences of it. If we do not pay attention to this today, then the jungle community will vanish from the earth. Our personal grievance is unimportant, we can deal with it, but it is also an issue of everyone’s survival. Don’t you all want to live, to survive?”

The birds were not really interested in a just decision, but the word survival caused an uproar. “Expel! Expel! Expel!” they shouted.

This terrified the dust-colored finches who had until then sat quietly, disinterested.

The Surkhab, as the legal advisor said the pacifying words: “Brothers,” he said “this problem is not as simple as you think. We have all the birds of the world here, so let us decide with a majority vote.”

The jungle reverberated with yet another uproar: “Banishment is the punishment for madness: Expulsion! Expulsion!”

A wizened old Kite rose from his group and said: “Master, send them to the human world. They are building the bombs that will obliterate all life. When those crazies erase their own seed, let the vultures be a part of it!”

The woodpecker, feeling a surge of compassion, said hesitantly, “*Sain*, all of us birds sometimes visit the human cities, but always return. The humans do impact us but not permanently. But if we banish the vultures completely to the human world then we will be responsible for their sins, for they will certainly learn evil from humans like envy and jealousy.”

The crows interrupted, “where is it written that human company causes envy and jealousy. Human is God’s vice regent, after all. Such talk does not suit us birds.”

The woodpecker, finding the mynah in his favor looked to her and said, “Why don’t *you* say something?”

Mynah flapped her wings to gain everybody’s attention, and said: “The first human madness happened when Cain killed Able. The crow saw human helplessness and alighted from the skies to teach Cain how to hide the body of his brother. Look at human pettiness, for they, instead of thanking the crow for his kindness, denigrated him and have always tried to enslave the birds with their intelligence. And when people of Cain feasted, they slaughtered wild animals, eating the meat themselves and throwing the bones everywhere. The dogs and cats, seeing this plenty, left their clans and settled in human habitations; they ate their fill and buried the rest in the sand, became victims of greed. This is a long story, Master, very long . . . humans might be the Best-of-all-the-Beings, but we cannot trust them; their company has never been beneficial for birds and animals.

The parrot, being mynah’s rival, interrupted and said: “If human company causes madness, and engenders envy, jealousy, and greed, then how come the donkey isn’t so, even though he is mans’ oldest companion?”

Mynah objected, “Tell me, how have the humans treated the donkey for all his loyalty, and kind-heartedness? How much is he burdened by the humans, and whenever they need to label someone foolish, they call him a donkey. The humans, when they cannot profit from the milk-giving animals, sell them to the butcher. Let’s not talk about humans, friends, or this discussion will be endless.”

The Kite, alarmed at this turn of the argument, interrupted and said, “It is pointless to discuss the profit and loss of the case. Sentence and expel! Sentence and expel!”

The Cuckoo implored, “Think, Justices. The Vulture will never return from the land of humans. We have an old relationship with the vultures; they have lived here in the same trees with us; how would they reform and rehabilitate in the company of men? How will it cure them?”

“You worry about the cure,” interrupted the Kite, “we are worried that this madness will infect the whole forest. Then what will we do?” The kites did not care about the discussion; they just wanted to hear the sentence.

But all the birds, having heard the Cuckoo’s words, sat musing, with their neck outstretched.

Seeing this, the quick eyed Kite spoke again: “This discussion has enlightened us partially, but has not allayed our fears completely. We demand that the Vulture nation be excommunicated and expelled from the forest. Then, if they want

to relate with the fishes or the humans, it is up to them; they will not be considered a part of the world of birds.”

Upon this, the black stork rose, and while standing on one leg, said: “Its not my place to speak in the company of such worthies, but will it be odd to ask the vulture to speak?”

The fluorescent light flickered thrice, and the Simurg asked: “Raja Gidh, what say you? Do you admit that you are unlike other birds? Do you suffer from fits of madness?”

Raja Gidh alighted from the tree branches and ambled forward to speak: “Yes, Master. On the moonlit nights, I fall off tall, canopied trees. I lose self control. I do not recognize my own kin. Then I wander on paths that lead nowhere.”

“Why are you compelled to act like this? No other bird suffers from such insanity.”

“He has confessed! Confessed!” yelled the kite group.

“When the foxes howl in the agony of madness,” continued Raja Gidh “we loose ourselves, Master . . . we do not understand this madness. We know we are guilty, but what causes this, we do not know. We will be thankful if someone could enlighten us about it.”

Upon this the Najdi bulbul spoke, “Friends, I am an inhabitant of deserts, my throat is imbued with the songs of the caravans, and my chest is crimson with the blood of human love. I have witnessed humans for centuries, and I can tell you that the cause of Vulture’s madness can be traced to human insanity. Human madness resides in an energy, which if stemmed can shatter the self to pieces.”

Owl, the most learned of all the birds, was suddenly attentive: “What kind of energy? Mechanical energy, atomic energy, electrical energy, potential or kinetic energy, sound or light energy?”

The Bulbul swelled her red chest and said, “All these energies combined make the human power.”

Everyone looked at the Bulbul with wide-eyed wonder.

“Human,” the Bulbul continued “is driven mad because of this very energy. Understand my worthies, when the energy is contained, it breaks the very vessel in which it is trapped.”

“How do you know? How? How?” yelled the birds.

“I am a resident of Najd. When my Sheikh traveled for trade, he carried me with him in a golden cage. Once, a sanyasi from Benaris revealed to me the true cause of human madness.”

“Tell! Reveal the sealed secret!”

“The human power lies in sexual energy; unlike animals and the birds, humans do not use this sexual energy for procreation alone. They rather, keep this

dark steed of energy restrained. This powerful restrained steed of energy helps them in traversing the long distance of the physical and the metaphysical worlds. Those who can control this wild steed attain absolute wisdom, but if they sit loosely in the saddle, then they fall and are called insane. The knowledge of the physical world results in poetry, painting, music and art. But if the emphasis is metaphysical, and the energy strong, then the humans touch the apex of awareness. If this power is withdrawn, they commit suicide. If the love is unrequited, then the horse drags the rider and humans become insane. People tie them up, stone them for their madness. This unrequited love is the true cause of human madness!”

The phosphorous light flickered thrice, and the Simurhg asked: “But what has human madness got to do with the Gidh Jati?”

The Bulbul replied, “Knowledge always travels from known to the unknown. Can’t we extrapolate from our knowledge of the human madness to suggest that Raja Gidh probably possess the same power and energy?”

“You mean the energy of unrequited love?” asked the Surkhab.

“Yes, somehow, he seems to have gained the same power.”

“Under the oath of God-given sustenance, tell us if you posses this energy?” asked the Simurgh.

Raja Gidh fluttered his wings and said: “Master, I need time; I am not aware of this secret. If you grant me some time, I can consult with my brethren and then apprise you of what we discover.”

Upon this, the Simurg extinguished the phosphate lamp. The clouds thundered and lightning flashed, the jungle turned fluorescent white. The meeting was adjourned till the next gathering. The birds started leaving in small groups, and the jungle faded out amidst the whispering hisses of snakes.

Zaheer Kashmiri: My Life, My Art¹

Translated by Muhammad Umar Memon

Some one hundred twenty-five years ago our family branch moved beyond Srinagar, spread across the district of Taran Taaran, and distinguished itself in religious knowledge and excellence. Up until India's partition, great religious festivals were held at the tombs of two of our family elders at Plasor and Galwali in which adherents of all religions and sects participated freely. Religious devoutness was the chief hallmark of our family. From very early on children were expected to perform the ritual prayers, observe the fast and memorize Qur'anic verses. Practically every discussion that took place around the family hearth submitted to traditional authority. Regardless of the complexity of the issue under discussion, the minute a Qur'anic verse or a saying of some eminent religious figure was cited, it effectively ended the discussion, causing everyone to bow his or her head in obeisance.

I was born in this traditional atmosphere. Fear of rational and logical methods of argument was instilled in me; I was instructed to seek guidance for life from age-old traditions and dicta instead.

When I was ten or eleven years old my mother died. My father remarried. My stepmother was not from our family. Although sensible and fair-minded, she was not without bias: she would snitch about my smallest misdeeds to my father who, being an irascible and overly oppressive man, would then subject me to an unrelenting dressing down. I was beaten quite a few times, and as many times kept hungry. Once, overwhelmed by his anger, I even attempted to throw myself from the roof in order to end my life, and once I was even banished from the house. In short, I spent a good part of my childhood in a veritable "Reign of Terror," my mind numbed from excessive tyranny and dread.

My father was initially a constable in the Central Investigation Department but later was promoted to Head Constable. His monthly salary was forty rupees. Consequently, during my early education I experienced great hardship and poverty. Except on festival days and fairs, I was always poorly dressed. I usually bought used books that disintegrated in a few weeks, and I never got more than two or three paisas a day for spending money. This contrasted oppressively with my well-

¹ "Meri Zindagi, Mera Fann," from *Savera* No. 9 (1951 or 1952), 52–65.

off classmates: their books, their satchels, their clothes, their faces—all exuded an effulgent freshness, and their snacks were always tasty and varied. They got much more spending money than I did. Even the teachers experienced something of an inferiority attack when they tested them regarding the lessons.

Ignorance, poverty and oppression totally paralyzed my life clear up to high school. I felt a strange suffocation and hemmed in by relentless fear, death and a lack of confidence, none of which I had the strength to fight. Finally, when I started to write poetry, I felt as though I had found my escape. To avoid the blows administered by external conditions, I took refuge in composing lyrical verse, and to keep safe from the bitter truths of life I started to weave dream-webs around myself.

Back then I didn't imagine that life could be profound or complex. I was still far removed from experiencing either life or the world rationally. My raw, naïve emotions lacked the reflection that comes with age and study. I composed on traditional romantic themes in very light, easy meters and declaimed my poems in local *musha'iras*.

The composition of those days was inescapably informed by my own past and the tragic conditions around me. Naturally the broken-hearted, leisure-seeking protagonist in my poems was none other than myself. Every single line I wrote reflected more or less the feelings of a passive personality. I was looking for the ecstasy of death in the tribulations of earthly love. I had no future. My early work reflects the mental state of a young poet born into an ordinary middle-class family who was oppressed at home and forced to memorize exhausted mantras about the undisputed authority of tradition and the authenticity of time-honored ways so that he might avoid being impudent or rebellious.

The twelfth grade at school was an historic year in my life. I was sitting in Marcido Hall smoking when a young Sikh man entered, came over to me and said in an exceedingly friendly manner, "Comrade!" I was quite taken aback. Until then I had only read the word "Comrade" in books and had also heard that it always spelled some great "danger," but I'd never come across a real, authentic comrade like this. With some difficulty, I swallowed the word the young man had thrown at me and said, "Welcome Sardar Sahib. What brings you here?"

In a whisper he informed me that he was a student at Khalisa College and that he and a group of students from other colleges had come to have a word with me. He asked me to go with him to the hall of Pearl Talkies because his other companions were waiting for me there. I accompanied him and found about ten students from different colleges waiting, a couple of them even known to me. During our conversation I couldn't escape the feeling that these young men all appeared to be quite "rebellious." They were members of the Student Federation (SF). This was the same Federation whose members were recently fired upon by order of the Con-

gress government of U.P. They wanted me to set up a chapter of the Federation in my own college. Unable to withstand the onslaught of these shrill and “dangerous students,” I agreed just to get them off my back.

Afterwards I met them a number of times. They belonged to all religions, but what was surprising to me was that during our discussions the Hindu students never dragged in the Vedas to clinch an argument, the Muslims didn’t seek authority or evidence from Qur’anic verses, and the Christians never brought in their Bible. Debates were always logical and weighty. In spite of belonging to different religions, they appeared very like-minded. They told me their struggle was not just directed against the wrong kind of traditionalism, it was also against oppression and poverty. Their conversation gave me the pleasant feeling that in their company I might be able to finally rid myself of the tradition-worship of my elders, the oppression of my parents, and even to escape the chronic poverty of my family. As I socialized with them I gradually came to realize that the struggle of the SF was no ordinary struggle, it was poised to bring about a revolution not just in *my* home, but in every home throughout the country.

Around the same time, chapters of the Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA) were beginning to be established in every nook and corner of India. The SF told me that those who ran this newly created Association were also members of their group. So I, who had by now been fully transmogrified into a veritable Oedipus, flung all thought of danger to the wind and joined that Association in my search for the truth.

I constantly improved my understanding of societal and imperialistic problems by attending the local study circle of the SF. And not just that, I also learned a great deal about the history of the Indian Congress and the nature of British imperialism. I attended lectures about the communist (socialist) struggle worldwide and came to know about the revolutionary achievements of trade unions and peasant councils. This thought-provoking education gave me both self-confidence and the impetus to change adverse conditions. All this enabled me for the first time to appreciate life as a tangible reality.

When I examined the creative work of the Progressive Writers closely I felt that it was pervaded by a spirit similar to the one that characterized most of the discussions of the FS study circles. Regret set in over my previous literary efforts and I often thought that everything I had produced up until then was a product of ignorance. It was very remote from life and its realities and bore no resemblance to the real problems of humankind. As a result, I slowly began to press my familiarity with new ideas and concepts into literary molds. This turned out to be a particularly formidable undertaking. It was not easy to veer from the conventions of classical Persian poetry and the practice of Urdu ghazal poets to find suitable

stylistic paradigms for the new content. Making the new concepts conform to old literary criteria was a mind-wrenching exercise. If I adhered to my avowed goal, the standard slipped; if I endeavored to maintain the standard, the thought became less scientific. So while one poem read like a raw, untamed expression of patriotism, the other made even new ideas sound old because of an overpowering regard for conventional style.

Although I had a general understanding of “progressivism” at the time, I was still nowhere close to an appreciation of the balance of its dialectical complexities. Luckily Mulk Raj Anand, who was then traveling the country to promote the Association, also visited us. In one of our meetings, I discussed with him at length the nature and essence of “progressivism.” The discussion helped greatly to clarify the meaning of the word for me. I understood that “progressivism” was not something that had relevance for a particular place and time. On the contrary, it was all-inclusive and general. First of all, it stood for human progress and had, and continues to have even now, a relationship with every newly emergent, upright power in the world. A literature that reflects upright and beneficial forces—and thereby confers upon them permanent eminence—that prophesies a better future and claims to bring it closer is in essence “progressive.”

I had of course understood that progressive literature was concerned first and foremost with human progress, but I still had no clear, complete, and authentic framework of the progressive process. The study circle had no doubt given good instruction at an analytical level, what it had not shown, though, was how to synthesize all the things it had taught me. This is perhaps the reason why, when in addition to composing poetry I—inspired by the many subjects elaborated for me by the progressive writers—started writing short stories and essays, they often lacked basic and realistic details. My stories suffered from a tendency to pontificate, and not just that, they ignored the unity of effect and plot. And yet as time moved along my literary personality began to acquire a distinct shape and blossomed as a consequence of my participation in the informative and instructive meetings of the Association. I started paying greater attention to thought and style.

The historic year of 1939 made its appearance during this period of my literary apprenticeship. Chamberlain declared war against the Axis powers, and India, in its role as a British colony, became a full participant in it. A UTC [?] had been set up in our college. The scions of *tahsildars*, *zamindars*, and *khan bahadurs* were throwing away their books and leaving for the front to become cannon fodder for the sake of their white masters. The arrest of the SF members began. Trade unionists and Congressites were being sent to jail and peasant councils were put under strict surveillance. The noise of war was getting louder by the day whether in the

markets, bazaars or in Vice-Regal Lodge. The PWA also didn't escape from the tentacles of this bloody, dramatic worldwide turmoil.

One day before going to the college I was browsing through the pages of the *Hindustan Times*. My eyes caught something and I stopped with a jolt reading: "My services are at the disposal of His Excellency." And below it appeared the name "Dr. M. D. Taseer." Dr. Taseer was a prominent member of our Association and like the rest of us considered the current war imperialistic. People thought of him as a revolutionary. The newspaper in front of me had completely exposed the truth about his "revolutionary spirit." He had metamorphosed into an opportunist, an agent of his white overlords. Once or twice we asked him to authenticate the news but he deftly evaded the issue. A few days later everyone heard him broadcast on the "Berlin News" program from the Lahore station of All India Radio—the worst kind of treason one might say.

Next came Professor Fareed. He was appointed Principal of Islamia College, Jullundar, and piped down. B. L. Kapur lost his speech too the minute he was made Principal of Fazalka College, and Professor Advani turned from a politician into an honorable citizen overnight. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, then secretary of the Association, was irrevocably lost to Hailey College of Commerce. And so, by the time 1941 rolled around the once invincible vanguard of the Association had been totally annihilated and I was taken into custody under the Defense of India Rules, number 38.

At first I was kept in Amritsar prison. Here, I got together with the other inmates and mounted a hunger strike against the violence to which we were subjected by the prison officers, with the result that I was put in solitary confinement. When that ended, I was shuffled around from prison to prison until I was transferred to Borstal Jail at Lahore, which turned out to be a great place for my political education.

At that time this jail had around 400 political prisoners, among them old freedom fighters, red-blooded revolutionaries, Congressites, socialists, communists, anarchists—in other words, the collective "dangers" of all of northern India had gathered here. This afforded me the unique opportunity to study the operational politics of each group.

Here I heard stories about Poona's Sitara terrorists and accounts of the Meerut Conspiracy case. I became acquainted with the achievements of Chandra Shekhar Azad and his group and hobnobbed with the veteran bomb-makers of Rawalpindi. I heard accounts of anonymous stalwarts of different revolutionary movements who, indifferent to reward or recognition, quietly sacrificed themselves in pursuit of their revolutionary mission and will perhaps never be given so much as a fleeting mention in any political history. An old guard at the jail showed me

the cell in which Das had starved himself to martyrdom. Even though the old man was himself an executioner who had dispatched countless criminals to their death, he couldn't keep tears from wetting his scraggly beard as he gave his eyewitness account of Das's sacrifice.

In Borstal prison we established Kirti—an extremist block drawn from communist and socialist workers. We hoisted a red flag on our ward's tallest tree, and using lime wash, we drew a gigantic hammer and sickle in the open compound where every morning we erupted into a spirited chorus of "The Whole World is Ours!"—so loud and rowdy it shook the whole joint.

The "extremist block" was essentially a study circle. Here, with the help of my companions I launched a systematic study of Marxism. I pored over and discussed dialectical materialism, Marx's philosophy of history and his concept of economics; I familiarized myself with the undying struggle of the communist parties of different countries and analyzed scientifically the causes of the failure of revolutionaries in Paris, Germany and Bulgaria. I attended lectures on the tenacious activities of the Chinese masses and acquired an awareness of the inevitable events produced by the Second World War. The methodical acquisition of modern learning fundamentally altered my personality and my concept of knowledge. I began to look upon the theoretical knowledge acquired at college as completely hollow and qualitatively inferior. Greek philosophy, notwithstanding its great value, began to look poorer in comparison to German materialism. Locke, Bentham, Hume and other English thinkers appeared little more than callow rationalists, and French materialists somewhat mechanistic. Kant's ethical assumptions and Hegel's philosophy of history sounded like little more than trumpeting for, respectively, absurd generalizations and spirituality.

German materialism helped me appreciate not only the basic principles at work behind the universe but also how material forces acted and reacted. It gave me comprehensive and scientific knowledge about social progress and a realization that Marxism was not merely art but also great science, not theory but action. The obliteration of the capitalist system was as certain as the demise of the dewdrop in the warm rays of the sun; the success of a worldwide communist revolution as assured as the glorious eruption of a colorful assortment of flowers in spring. In the early days of my incarceration one thought that often dogged me was the incomprehensible betrayals of the smartest intellectuals of our time who had worked in the vanguard of the Progressive Writers. Indeed, why did they turn tail? Why could they not face British tyranny for the sake of the country's independence—they who were experts in anthropological sciences?

Now, after systematically studying Marxism, it all became clear as day: regardless of the depth of one's understanding of Marxism, it was very nearly im-

possible to become a true revolutionary until one had actually participated in mass movements to do battle with the collective interests of the *élite*, the privileged classes. The Paris commune failed precisely because it was crowded with arm-chair revolutionaries—the Blanquists. And the frontline of the Progressive Writers crumbled because it too had a crush of upper- and middle-class bohemians loath to step out of their romantic- and dream-cocoons when called on for action.

This quantum of knowledge had a decisive influence on my concept of literature and literary subjects—a light that has never ceased to light my way in the adoption of literary forms. The materialist analysis of history exposed to my view a plethora of social traditions that had been gnawing mankind hollow for centuries. And yet, despite mankind’s knowledge of the utter harm and ineffectiveness of those traditions they, being cowardly and superstitious, still clung to them tenaciously. All my poems that rail against such obscurantist social conventions, were the product of the knowledge gained through study during that period, and even today this knowledge continues to be my greatest guardian and guide. I opposed unsound national concepts and supported true universalism. I defied organized religion and the frosty concept of divinity as an instrument of exploitation wielded by government institutions; I cast the tangible realities of life in the mold of poetry, exposed the two-facedness of despotic and capitalistic law, and condemned the deterministic nature of fate. On the other hand, I illuminated the bond between nature and man from modern and healthy perspectives and highlighted the indelible struggle of the lower classes.

Although Persian and Urdu poetry is filled with philosophical ideas, it was not easy for me to present this material using new, unexplored structures. The method of our classical poets has always been to present philosophical ideas directly or most explosively. This was impossible in the new *nazm*, which in its essence, like the ghazal, does not allow for volatility. If one attempted to present a philosophical idea directly, it didn’t sound like a poem but rather the bare statement of a philosophic thesis. So what I did instead was mobilize basic symbols to present complex thought poetically, striving at the same time for the symbol and the details employed in a poem to yield the maximum aesthetic effect. The majority of my poems in this vein are generally both direct and symbolic, and yet sensitive to the literal, visual, auditory, and tactile effects.

I got out of prison in the middle of 1942. My intellectual evolution demanded that the time had come for me to get directly involved in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Accordingly, I immediately joined the local trade union. The position the proletariat enjoys is accorded to no other class in Marxist philosophy. As I established a dialectical link with this group, I couldn’t help but be struck by colossal bewilderment: how could the proletariat—a filthy, uncivilized,

uneducated people—ever successfully pull off what amounted to a worldwide revolution? At first the question assaulted my mind in its full vehemence. When, however, I observed the proletariat from up close, peeked into its heart, groped into its conscience, I began to consider its revolutionary leadership inevitable for the contemporary world.

I saw workmen toil at machines; I saw them in their mud houses, in markets and fairs; at walkouts and strikes; and how they were *lathi*-charged and gunned down. In the factories they worked on the machines like lifeless, mechanical cogs; in their quarters they writhed from hunger and illness; at fairs and markets they displayed a simple, artless civility. But they were a fiery flame when struck; smiling when clubs fell on them; and when fired upon, they would die, affixing the stamp of longevity on the unity of workers.

They don't have glitzy clothes to put on, posh bungalows to live in, or swank cars to ride, yet they occupy a place at the summit. They are truly great. Teach Marxism to a member of the middle or upper class all you want, for years if need be, but you will probably never succeed in making him a staunch revolutionary. By contrast, a worker, after just a little thought, immediately volunteers to assume the difficult and bone-crushing responsibility of mass revolution and the future of humankind. Revolution is in their blood. They despise every opportunist and believer in reconciliation; they are fighters who kick the Royalists out of Amritsar and Gulzari Lal Nanda from Ahmedabad. If their political awareness ever matures, they are quite capable of blocking the ships of the Dutch imperialists from snatching Indonesia ever again.

I worked in the local, provincial and India-wide workers organizations until 1945. During this time I was twice imprisoned on charges of "creating unrest" and "rioting." In fear because of my political activities, my parents had already thrown me out of the house in 1942. I spent the entire period of my engagement with the workers living in a dingy little room on top of the last roof of the offices of the provincial trade union. The upper portion of the front door of this room had a gaping hole. Even after you had locked it, two rotund men could easily get through the opening at the same time. Many times my books were stolen from my room, and one time some thief who must have been an artist himself made off with two of my oil paintings that hung on the wall. In jest my friends used to call this room "Dr. Johnson's Garret."

The ceaseless struggle of the proletariat endowed my art with vigor and steadfastness. Their immense sacrifices made me realize that lackadaisical literary involvement was not about to help bring the revolution closer. Just as the revolution needed numberless ironclad muscular arms, it also needed as many hot, fiery words. The economic and political war of the proletariat also gave my creative

writing a fighting aura. I had noticed that in their encounters with the capitalist, the proletariat dropped all pretence of civility and politeness and attacked frontally with relentless ferocity. This made me realize that if a poet or prose writer sought to liberate art and culture, he needed to use his writing as a soldier's weapon in order to annihilate the enemies of civility and culture.

During that period the All-India Kisan (Peasant) Conference at Bhakna galvanized my literary consciousness. As part of the Conference program a *musha'ira* had also been arranged where I recited a blatantly political poem. At the end of the Conference before an audience of nearly 500 delegates and local workers, Sohan Singh Josh, Secretary of the Punjab Communist Party, subjected my poem to a relentless critique in the course of his otherwise self-critical speech. Among other things, he said that it would have been much better if the poet had recited this poem before the students of some Lahore girls' college. This comment hurt my writer's pride a great deal. Unable to comprehend the true import of this broadside, I nonetheless firmly resolved to familiarize myself with the Marxist critical method. And so I did. I made it a constant subject of study.

I ventured to understand the aesthetic elaborations of Marx and Engels. I profited from Lenin's theory of reflection ('*aks*) and Gorky's doctrine of socialist realism. Additionally, I also studied a smattering of modern American, English, and Russian critics, such as James T. Farrell, Alik West, Ralph Fox, Codwell, Lehman, etc.

Whatever critical work I read I took notes from it regularly and used them to write my own essays. In spite of their occasional inadequacies and sketchiness, due mainly to a lack of time, the country's literary circles nonetheless generally appreciated these essays. That's how I started writing in a sustained manner on the subject of literary criticism.

During this time I became conscious of the fact that art, notwithstanding its universal and timeless beauty, was still conditioned by society and time. Classical subjects were not the sole provenance of literature. Equally enduring artistic values could also be created around ephemeral and incidental topics. This thought spurred me on to employ subjects drawn from national and international events. I composed verse on the imperialist period of the Second World War, tried to put the masses center stage, commented on the incomparable bravery of the martyrs of Sevastopol, and wrote poetry about Europe's Red Revolution.

By mid-1945 my personal affairs had become so tangled that I had to leave for Lahore, not so much for the acquisition of art as for a livelihood. Here, I worked as an adviser for film companies and felt like a warrior who had abandoned the Leningrad front and landed in Hollywood to indulge in some third-rate, sleazy romance. There were no longer any working class people around me; instead I was

surrounded by world-class speculators. No *Das Kapital* on the desk but snapshots of naked women. What drove a discussion here were not topics such as human evolution or the philosophy of the collective, but rather production estimates and backstage love affairs.

Before my arrival in this glitzy world I had cherished high hopes of improving our indigenous cinema. A little effort was all it would take to bring out the great potential of films. Storylines that usually focused on characters drawn from the upper and middle classes could also portray the life of the working class. I was under the impression that putting the plays, festivals, dances, and songs of the common people on screen would make them immensely popular, and I used to think that film lingo, which rode roughshod over any kind of grammar, could be tamed to follow strict grammatical rules. When, however, I examined my new environment closely from a practical perspective, all my high hopes evaporated into thin air. The producers were in no mood to disseminate useful and educational ideas. On the contrary, they wanted to sell whatever was popular. The actors as a rule stayed awake late into the night, forever plotting their sleazy machinations to mount surprise attacks on privacies, and dressing room employees were willing to lose everything for a glass of whisky or a fleeting kiss. Moral uprightness was practically nonexistent and every life was bereft of lofty purpose. If anything even remotely reformative was ever mentioned, the usual response was a volley of loud jeers. Within a few months I accepted defeat and also started selling art in this market of art auctioneers. Whatever I wrote during my association with film institutions was not literature but an affront to literature, not art but business. I take no pride in it; rather I am ashamed.

Back in those days Lahore didn't have any literary institution other than the *Ḥalqa-e Arbāb-e Zauq*. For a long time I attended its meetings regularly. I closely examined the creative literature presented there and the litterateurs who produced it, but not for a moment did I allow myself to be influenced by the product or the producer. Diverse trends in form and content were in evidence in this literary circle, all of which inevitably led to Formalism. Most of its major literary men were pessimists who considered the pleasure of death, democracy, and the sexual excitement of the fast-fading international bourgeoisie the pinnacle of art. Much of their literary output was little more than a grotesque mimicry of Western Freudians, and some writers didn't even have a Freud to back them up, let alone have a clear purpose or perception of life. Mentally confused and fuzzy, they attempted to hide their shortcomings in riddles, hoping the reader of their poems would find them amusing. Some even assumed surrealism was the height of poetic art. I cannot recall a single meeting of the *Ḥalqa* in which I didn't end up ruffling some feathers or stepping on some toe through my outright impertinence. I was always a Marxist in my

critical approach and I'm inclined to think that the living philosophy that throbbed within my art did affect some of the participants. As a result, my essay "The Social Backdrop of Urdu Prose," which I had written from a frankly socialist perspective, was chosen as one year's best essay during the Halqa's Annual Conference and I was awarded a cash prize of thirty-three rupees, five annas and six pies.

This was the period of my political and literary bankruptcy. My association with mass movements declined and I gradually stopped reading political literature. The inevitable consequence was the appearance of a cognitive dissonance in my art. If a piece somehow escaped thematic contraction, it fell smack dab into "vanguardism." This period was distanced from life's healthy stimuli. Consequently, my creative pace slowed and I began to incline increasingly toward pleasurable lyricism.

Meanwhile the horrific year of 1947 came upon us. British imperialism auctioned off 400 million Indian human beings to "Muslim Biggies" and "Hindu Biggies" in lieu of the Marshall Plan. Humanity had already been martyred in Bihar, Bengal and Nawakhali, now a bloody and fiery cloud spread through the Punjab. Heer's colorful spinning wheel became her funeral pyre and her Ranjha was buried in his grave at Tarajan along with all of his melodious songs. The Chenab turned red in its snaking course. The romance that grew along the stretch of five rivers was devastated in no time at all like the marital bliss (*suhāg*) of a widow.

The news of Partition forced my clan to flee Amritsar but they couldn't make it to Lahore intact. One of my uncles and two young cousins were murdered on the way. Back in Lahore the film industry had all but collapsed. The balance of human and social relationships that had molded me in a particular way for such a long time suddenly fell apart. The environment around me changed so drastically that all I could see before me was the death of man or the satanic politics of British imperialism foisted upon me and every nonpolitical Indian and Pakistani.

All the anthropological knowledge I had consigned to oblivion for a while now slowly began to resurface in my consciousness. Once again I threw myself into the study of political literature, making the national and international political forces let loose by the Second World War the subject of my inquiry.

Eastern Europe turned red immediately following the war. British power folded in Egypt and Palestine. In Asia, the Chinese masses started to administer decisive blows to American interests. Indonesia, Burma, Vietnam, and the Philippines became the arena of the peoples' battles. In India, armed jahazi (ship-workers) rose up under the leadership of the Socialist Party. The Army became rebellious in 1946, 1947. Bengal and Maharashtra peasants awakened.

The Telangana region started to produce not slaves but gorillas.

Watching its colonies and monopolies slip away and internal industrial systems disintegrate, the head honcho of the world's exploitative powers, the Anglo-American block, started weaving its web of machinations against the Soviet Union—the most formidable bulwark of eastern and western mass movements and especially of progressivism. Under the cover of the Balfour Declaration, the state of Israel was established with the ostensible purpose of shattering Arab unity. The federation of Western Europe was founded to put Eastern Europe under blockade. The bankrupted Dutch government was bailed out with massive monetary aid so that it might be enabled to reoccupy Indonesia and provide a counterbalance to the emerging power of Chinese revolutionaries. Through military and civilian intervention, Gasperi's Party succeeded in the Italian elections. Military bases were established throughout the Middle East. For economic exploitation, astronomical military budgets were set up to throw the world into the flames of a third worldwide war.

Similarly, the Anglo-American block stirred up religious fanaticism to suppress the peoples' movements in India. They carved up the South Asian subcontinent among princely states, nabobs and landowners, and other moneyed classes, on condition that they would work toward strengthening the British block throughout the world, even after Britain lost its territorial power over them. They would increase their economic ties with Britain and its friends and support the Anglo-American block to defeat the progressive forces of East and West."²

This study removed my confusion. I felt a surge of renewed strength and freshness and devoted myself to the work of the Progressive Writers' Association.

² It is unclear whether the indented passages are actual quotations, or simply thoughts Kashmiri formulated through study, or merely his impressions. — Tr.

List of Recent Pakistan-Related Texts

Compiled by David Waterman

Ali, Saleem H. *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs*. OUP Pakistan, 2009. 350 pages. ISBN: 978-0195476729.

Ayres, Alyssa. *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan*. Cambridge UP, 2009. 230 pages. ISBN: 978-0521519311.

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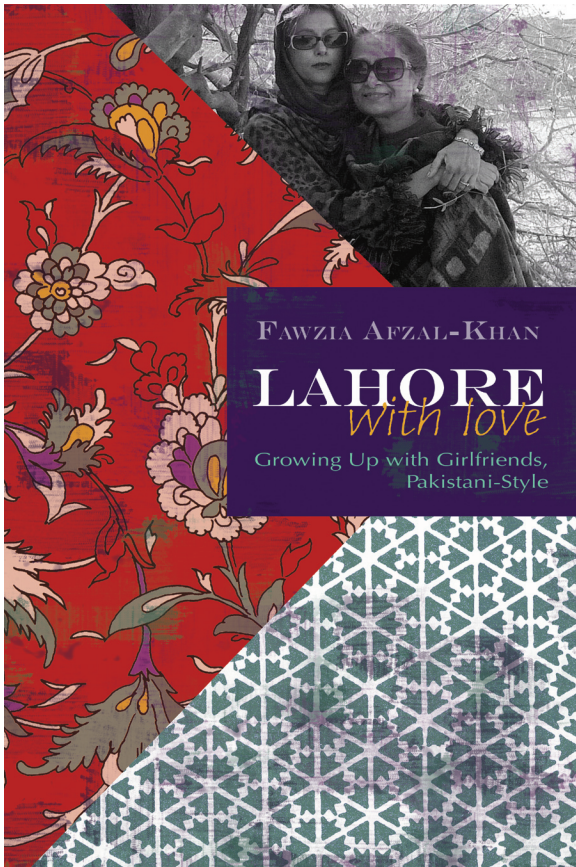
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