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Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies

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Remembering Ralph Russell

By Muhammad Umar Memon

La'on kahan se dusra tujh sa kahen jise
Where might I find someone like you?
—Ghalib

Most of the obituaries and articles that have appeared about Ralph Russell in the past twelve months have said all that needs to be said about him, more eloquently perhaps than I could ever hope to. His life was an open book, but curiously a book that defied any notion of linearity or sequential order, based on some rare verity of spatial unfolding in which the entire content of a life is simultaneously present. Yet the book was not without discretion, shown largely in deference to the fragility of human feelings and our tendency to take umbrage where none is intended. If he slept a peaceful sleep—I believe some have alluded to the fact—it was because his conscience was not burdened with secrets or guilt. Ralph had probably uncovered much earlier in life what it had taken Ghalib a lifetime to learn,

Na luTta din ko to kab raat ko yun be-khabar sota
Raha khatka na chori ka du'a deta hun rahzan ko

Why else would I sleep so soundly at night had I not been
robbed during the day?
No fear of theft assails my heart, I wish my robber well.

And as a bonus, without losing his assets to the highwayman: Ralph had set out on the highway of life with meager provisions, and practically no attachment to what little he did bring along. Why wonder if as an adult he slept like a child. He was such a light traveler after all.

For my part, all I can do is recount a few moments in which our lives intersected hoping that what transpired in those moments will confirm and corroborate the experiences of others and furnish a contextual framework for them. While he may have had especially strong relationships with some, the “specialness” of the

relationship did not place him or the other above everyone else on a human scale. In his eyes, all—or in Sa’dī’s words, the “*bani aadam*”—as he himself, were “*azaa’-e yak digar*,” or part of a single human continuum. Because his relationship was qualitatively the same with everyone, any elaboration of the relationship is likely to produce only variations on a single theme rather than radically different themes. In the end, any attempt to describe him will be at best an attempt to describe oneself. Well, so be it. ...

I had, of course, known Ralph through his Urdu work much earlier than 1977, but my formal interaction with him began that year. I invited him to a seminar on “The Urdu Ghazal and Prose Fiction: Materials for the Study of Muslim Society in South Asia” that was being planned for early 1978. Ralph graciously accepted, but warned me that it was unlikely that he would be given a U.S. visa, having been denied one earlier for a similar occasion because of being an active Communist. “If they ask me the question,” he wrote, “I’m afraid, my answer would be YES.” But we were still willing to do what we could to facilitate the process. It never got that far. A subsequent letter informed, “Mrs. Russell has been taken ill. I’m afraid I won’t be able to come.”

I do not recall any correspondence after that until, I believe, 1983 when the Amir Khusrau Society (Chicago) invited him to something like a mini-conference. He was to present his ideas about teaching Urdu to second generation South Asians and their American spouses and conduct a few workshops. Lectures at some American universities were also arranged for him. Luckily he did get the visa. I went to the Chicago event, mainly to see him and brought along some reprints of my articles, which I presented to him.

Next day Ralph told me in no uncertain terms that he did not agree with what I had written about the Urdu Progressives, especially in the article “Partition Literature: A Study of Intizar Husain” (*Modern Asian Studies*). He felt that I was grossly unfair in my assessment of the fictional work of the Progressives. He had apparently read the article in the intervening night and had even underscored some of the offending passages. I felt slightly disoriented: I liked the man for what I had seen of him, someone after my own heart, someone with whom I would like to have a long and lasting fellowship, and here it seemed our relationship was getting off to a bad start. As he registered his disapproval it became clear that his passionate high regard for the Progressives had more to do with their Socialist orientation and less with an evaluation of their output from a strictly literary point of view. This is perhaps not quite accurate: from Ralph’s vantage the socialist ideals of the Progressives, with whom he identified strongly out of his own commitment to communism, were in fact, or ought to be, the literary ideals, the only ideals worth having, much like Munshi Premchand who made no bones about harnessing literature in the ser-

vice of man and society. This fact perhaps also underlay his choice of the few Urdu short stories he had translated. I am reminded of two, though there may be more: Krishan Chandar's "Kaalū Bhangī" and Sa'adat Hasan Manto's "Kaalī Shalwar." What attracted him to these stories, it would appear, were their characters—disfranchised and shunned by society for what they did to eke out a living. Yet none of this mattered, what did matter was the resilience of their spirit and their precious human fiber.

Progressive or socially informed writing aside, Ralph was quite adamant in his insistence on reading the Urdu ghazal as a social document, a contentious point on which he was to lock horns with Frances Pritchett in the pages of the *Annual of Urdu Studies* (henceforward, *AUS*). This arguable conflation of the societal and the literary was a bit puzzling for me. I have always believed, wrongly or rightly, in the autonomy of literature.

So did the misstep doom our incipient relationship? Hardly. As the day wore on, my apprehension about its future dissipated. Having said his piece, Ralph was back to being his old self: cheery, spontaneous, warm, and attentive. Although I had not tried to defend myself or argue against his view, Ralph had apparently sensed that my silence did not indicate agreement. Perhaps it was already clear to both of us that our respective points of view were irreconcilable. I liked the man, but one-way relationships seldom endure. I wondered what lay behind what I assumed to be his acceptance of me? At the time I could only interpret it as an act of kindness on his part. It took years to realize that I was not the lone recipient that day or, for that matter, any other day, of his characteristic kindness (though Ralph would probably call it by some other name). It was something born out of his abiding regard for the value and worth of every human being, despite their human failings. As I would come to know later, existence for Ralph, however wretched or sublime, was a positive value in itself. ("Oh Lord, give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change," he would quote to me many times over the years. Perhaps my ideas about Progressive writing were just one of those things he could not change but accepted with serenity.)

After the Chicago *tamaasha*, he visited Madison. His lecture, but equally the atmosphere of *sulh-e kul* (not to be confused with opportunism or *ibnu'l-vaqti*) that radiated out of him like a comforting and life-affirming light, immediately endeared him to many of my colleagues, especially Sarah Atish who, to this day, remembers him with fondness and warmth. At home, he met my wife and our two boys and immediately became involved in their world. There was none of the painful diffidence or stiff formality of first meetings. It was as if they were friends who went back a long way. I mention this to underscore the effect he had on people. Those who were recipients of his "Journal" were kept informed, in an amazingly

detached and matter-of-fact manner, of his deteriorating condition. On 6 May 2008 he wrote:

On the 30th April I went for my regular appointment at the urology clinic. I was seen by the top consultant, Mr. Bailey. I have encountered him before and been very favourably impressed by him. He listens very carefully to what you have to tell him before jumping in and making pronouncements of his own. Marion, as always, was with me. He told me something which was more surprising to me than to Marion, which was that my cancer is spreading and the spread cannot be stopped; the best they can do is slow down its progress somewhat. I asked him myself at the end what the prognosis was. He said 'I don't like telling people these things' and I said, 'All the same, it is better to be told them.' He said the worst prognosis is that I have another 6–8 months to live. Marion and I talked about this on the way home and decided that since we knew that I was not likely to survive many more years it was not a great blow to be given an estimate, and that the conclusion to be drawn is for us to pay more attention to priorities and otherwise carry on as usual. One pleasing result is that two of my friends, Barbara Anglezarke and Liz Crompton, have said that they will be coming to see me. I think they would probably have come anyway but not felt that there was any great urgency about it. For myself it makes me feel more intensely the love which I feel for all the people who are close to me.

I informed my younger son, Anis, then in Italy, about the prognosis given by Ralph's physician. He said he would go and see him. When I later mentioned this to my wife she called Anis immediately to say that he should not wait, and he didn't. Later Anis told me that during the visit he found Ralph as he had always been: engaging, attentive and considerate, interested in knowing all about him and his life, without a trace of anxiety or the kind of aloofness that sometimes takes over a person aware of their imminent departure. Anis had visited him many times before, and on occasion had stayed with him. The two struck up quite a friendship. Since Anis lived sometimes in France, sometimes in Italy, Ralph would often ask me for his address and write to him. Correspondence and maintaining relationships has become increasingly difficult for me during the past decade or so. I remember Ralph often reminding me of my tardiness, especially during the last few years. It has never ceased to amaze me how Ralph managed a fairly large circle of friends across many continents, and yet found the time to read and write more than most of us can. I do recall Anis asking me a few years ago, "Why don't you talk to Ralph about Urdu literature?" Apparently Ralph had mentioned to him in passing, "Your

father avoids discussing Urdu literature with me.” I remembered what had transpired during the Chicago event as well as all my subsequent silences and evasions on occasions when Ralph had himself attempted to broach the subject. Maybe I should, I told myself. It never came to that. And even if it had, I know I would have woefully lacked the resources to engage with him in a dispassionate way about my views.

My family were not the only ones affected by Ralph’s vivacity and naturalness. As recently as mid-April of this year (2009), when my friends Itrat and his wife Elizabeth came to visit, I asked Elizabeth if she remembered Ralph. She had attended the 1983 Chicago event. “How could I forget him?” she said. “I attended his Urdu workshops. I still remember what he said about the U.S., ‘These toll-booths, they’re so medieval!’ I thought it was so funny that he would say that.” Her expression changed when I informed her of his death and a few moments of introspective silence followed.

During Ralph’s stay at my home he asked me one evening to take him to some store where he could buy a pair of pants. This threw me off. I could not believe anyone who lived in London would want to buy an item of clothing in this country. To me it seemed clothes were made more tastefully in the U.K., but I took him to a department store. He wasted no time looking around. He spotted a pile of corduroy pants and reached for the nearest pair, with the worst possible color, at least in my opinion. Color or choice did not seem to matter. He wanted a pair and any would do, why waste time. He wanted to just pay and for us to be on our way. I asked him to at least try it on. “What size do you wear?” He gave me a puzzled look. Finally the salesman, with his measuring tape, helped him out of this difficult situation. And that was that. On the way home he told me that he had heard clothes were cheaper in the U.S.

Ralph delivered his round of lectures and returned to London. The relationship that formed with Ralph during his visit to Madison was kept alive over roughly the next decade through sporadic correspondence and some brief meetings in London, usually on my way to or from Pakistan.

Around this time my case for promotion to full professorship came up and my committee approached five established scholars to evaluate my work, Ralph being one of them. I would never have known had I not received a copy of a four- or five-line handwritten letter Ralph had sent to the chair of my committee. He had excused himself saying he had not read enough of my work to speak confidently about it. Ralph had sent the copy to me himself, without any explanation or even the least bit of contrition. What preserved its integrity was its impeccable honesty and matter-of-factness. Did it hurt? Perhaps. But as calm settled in and reason returned, the hurt faded away. Whether I liked it or not, I could only respect such a man.

There was not a single word that betrayed the smallest trace of ill will or cunning or design. As I came to know more about Ralph and his dealings with others in the years that followed, I understood he could not have done otherwise. It was not a lack of goodwill, in fact he went out of his way to help people, but he did so without compromising his principles or his regard for honesty and fairness. He really had not read much of my work, and what little he had read disenchanting him. He did not even read any of my books, which I sent him later on, but nonetheless kept them in his library as a gift from a friend.

I vividly recall a visit to his office in a room of some building on campus which he used after he took early retirement from SOAS. *Aavaargi*, a book of my Urdu translations, had been recently published and I brought a copy for him. I asked him to read it. I had worked very hard on its language and was more than a little satisfied. Ralph graciously obliged and began to read my introduction out loud in my presence. He was visibly discomfited. The language was not simple enough—his verdict. Simple and straightforward expression was what he himself strived for and never lost an opportunity to point out disapprovingly if he spotted its absence in others. It was a theme to which he returned again and again with the regularity of a refrain in our countless discussions about Urduwallahs. While I appreciated his quest for simple language, this was another point where we did not see eye to eye, though we rarely debated the issue. I have always thought of literary writing as an artifact, something crafted. That the emphasis on “simple” was coming from a person who chose to translate Ghalib, who was anything but simple, was a bit surprising. Ralph could not do much about poetry. It was inherently the province of a select few. But the boundaries of prose stretched far enough to embrace the better part of humanity and Ralph’s business was with this “better part.” If one used difficult language and expression, it drove a wedge between human beings and risked alienation. Ralph would have none of it. The logic here was impeccable. Nevertheless I had my own reservations.

As I was to find out on my frequent future *ziyaarats* to Ralph’s Inn, his Sarae, the serenity pervading his small living room—which he regularly used for taking naps, not on the couch but on the thinly-carpeted floor—the feeling of being close to him, even when we just sat together each immersed in his own work, made debates on such subjects seem pointless, without any existential gravity or weight. There, in that haven of repose only the comfort of togetherness seemed real, the sole meaning of life.

I had come to look upon my visits to the Sarae as something of a necessity, which prompted me to visit him as often as I could, indeed so often and so regularly that I left a pair of slippers and a towel at his place so I would not have to lug them along every time. What drew me to him was the feeling that I could be myself in

his presence, without any pretensions or masks. Ralph's disarming innocence, his forthrightness, his total honesty and frankness about himself and the world at large left no room for pretension or masks. And I always came away feeling strangely light and renewed.

In 1985 I stopped briefly in London on my way to Pakistan. I went to see Ralph at his office. His face lit up. At lunch time he took me to a Sardarji's Indian restaurant, praised it to high heaven, and ordered a few dishes, among them a couple of skewers of our spicy *seekh kabaab*, which to my surprise looked strangely pinkish and grainy. Of course I later found out that the liberal use of red food coloring was the hallmark of many grilled or *tanduri* dishes in overseas Indian cuisine. Physical appearance aside, the taste of the *kabaabs* was good.

I cannot now recollect what we talked about then except that he again invited me to stay at his place anytime I visited London. "It will be no trouble," he said, "you will do your work, and I will do mine, and we will talk when I have time."

A couple of years after the *sikh kabaabs*, I decided to visit and stay with him at his 33 Theatre Street Sarae. I had been to London many times before, where access to most places is fairly easy by public transportation. All the same, Ralph met me at Heathrow. I was not only pleasantly surprised but also quite embarrassed. What with my decades of living in the West, I still retained something of the Easterner in me. He was a good twenty years my senior. The kind gesture left a deep impression on me. A second embarrassment came on a subsequent visit when I was flying in and out of Gatwick. Sarae Raalf was only a couple of blocks from the Clapham Junction station with access to trains for Gatwick. On the day of my departure as we were ready to leave, Ralph picked up one of my bags and slung it over his back like a knapsack (the veritable image of a South Asian railway-station coolie) and said, "Let's go." Try as hard as I could, I was not able to convince him to set the bag down. He insisted, I unwillingly relented, and we set off for the station.

Soon after arriving at his place on this first visit I had noticed the absence of Mrs. Russell. I knew she existed because it was her illness that had prevented Ralph from coming to our seminar in 1978. But from my experience of such situations in the U.S., where it is considered impolite to ask a person about their spouse when meeting them after an appreciably long interval, I restrained myself from asking about her outright. Perhaps at some point he sensed the question lurking in my eyes and put me at ease. With his characteristic matter-of-factness he informed me that they had parted company, or words to that effect. He did not use the word "divorce." It was not my business to know anything more, but he did say by way of the briefest explanation that they had difficulty getting along.

The week or so I stayed with him we talked—only when he took a break from his work or at meal times—about all kinds of things: people we both knew, books, his experiences in India and Pakistan. And this remained pretty much the pattern of our interaction during many subsequent visits, broken now and then by sunny walks in the park near his Sarae in Battersea, an inner-city district in South-West London. He introduced me to his South African friends Robert and Marion Molteno, living in the U.K. since 1977, who were like his family, their house just a few minutes walk from the Sarae. Marion used to come early in the morning, when we were both still sleeping, to work on her novel (probably *A Shield of Coolest Air*, 1992) in the solitude of Ralph's small study before going to work. I don't remember whether it was a Wednesday or a Thursday that some students came to study Urdu with him—grown men and occasionally a woman who were professionals, one was even a doctor. (So this was his free-of-charge Urdu class!) The little group gave the impression of an informal gathering of friends having a good time—munching salted nuts provided by Ralph, drinking the beer they had brought, chatting in Urdu with Ralph explaining points of grammar in between, his uproarious laugh rising above everyone else's following some spicy joke, a witty remark, a wisecrack now and then. It was hard to escape the feeling of being in the midst of a carnival of some sort, a celebration of life, to be enjoyed utterly. For Ralph, life was a gift for which one ought to be grateful. He sang and laughed, recited poetry and told jokes as he explored its possibilities with uncommon diligence and verve, and without wasting a moment. In the end, he lived it as he wanted to, and made it a little better for others.

Perhaps they were students, but Ralph seemed to know them intimately, the smallest detail of their lives. He was full of inquisitiveness, but only if this word were to be stripped of the unfortunate implication of snooping sometimes attached to it. His was not the kind of curiosity that makes you put up your guard. No, it was an exuberant and deep-rooted participation in life, not just his own, but everyone else's, if only to feel the bond shared by all humanity. Ralph was never direct. He had an unobtrusive way of asking about you. He gave his queries a contextual relevance: your life was part of a human narrative that did not begin with you, nor was it likely to end with you, but neither could it do without you.

During my visits Ralph told me about his brothers, his three children whom he felt very close to and visited regularly, and his father who had been involved in some kind of mismanagement that had brought down the family. He talked about women he had known and been close to, especially one he had loved dearly as a young man and she him. He had wanted to marry her but that didn't happen. Decades later he ran into her, now widowed, and they met occasionally as friends. This was neither confession nor confiding. He was very open about many things. It is all

there in *Findings, Keepings: Life, Communism and Everything*, the first volume of his autobiography.

The simple, unpretentious décor of his house betrayed its occupant's indifference to matter and money, beyond what was necessary for a simple life. One day he told me that he did not have enough funds to buy his present lodging in a block of what might be best described as interconnected townhouses. The Moltenos offered to make up the difference, their contribution reverting to them after he was gone, the rest divided among his heirs. It was then he told me that when he and Mrs. Russell parted, he had not wanted to terminate the relationship with a divorce—not because he entertained any notion of their coming together again at some point, but because he wished for her to receive his pension after him.

The Moltenos were the sort of friends few people are fortunate to have. They looked after him and considered him family. Marion would come and check on him practically every day and during his last illness, as well as all previous ones, her devotion and care were exemplary. One can gather as much from the frequent references to her in Ralph's "Journal." The Moltenos would also put up his friends at their place if his were unavailable for some reason. I remember one time I spent a night at their home. When I had arrived Ralph's niece Kleta and her Algerian-French Muslim husband Boucif Slimane, who lived in France, were visiting him. Probably it was an unexpected visit. I spent most of the day with Ralph and the couple. In the evening the husband, a non-literary man, exuberant and full of life, fixed us a fine meal slapped together from whatever provisions he could find in Ralph's small refrigerator and cupboards. Next day, Ralph told me all about the couple's life and their children. As Boucif didn't know English, Ralph would brush up on his French before the couple's visit. He enjoyed the husband's company a lot, so much that the two had taken a trip together to India in the early 1990s and had a fine time.

My other memories include Ralph talking about various Urduwallahs (incidentally, our favorite subject), some of whom he respected and remembered tenderly while others, well let's just say he did not mention them with any feeling of unpleasantness or ill will. Apparently some had treated him rather shabbily. In one conversation Ahmed Ali of *Twilight in Delhi* fame cropped up. I knew Ahmed Ali quite well, and made a point of visiting him whenever I was in Karachi. Tall—or at any rate tall-looking because skeletal—he exuded an aura of refinement and culture. Otherwise delightful and engaging, he suffered from an undue suspicion of others' motives. He had a long-standing feud with the Urdu Progressives and lambasted them roundly in his scathing articles and conversation. His deep-seated dislike sprang from his feeling that although he had played an important, indeed a pivotal role in the founding of the Progressive Movement, its *karta-dhartas*, Saj-

jad Zaheer and his cohorts, had willfully ignored it and had practically excised him from the Movement's annals. He never lost an opportunity to chastise them and unload his bitter feelings. In the long list of affronts and injustices perpetrated against him by various people, he once mentioned Ralph. He was adamant that it was Ralph's negative evaluation of his translations of Urdu poetry (which were eventually published by Columbia University Press as *The Golden Tradition: An Anthology of Urdu Poetry*) that led to the book's rejection by Oxford University Press (OUP), to which it had been initially submitted. He was so bitter about it that he even wrote disparaging things about Ralph in Pakistani English newspapers when, if my memory serves me right, Ralph was visiting Pakistan.

Ralph, on the other hand, had a different story to tell. He felt sorry that Ahmed Ali felt that way, for he had done no such thing. He had stressed the strong points in his evaluation and offered some suggestions that he thought would enhance the book's value. If OUP didn't accept the book, this could not have been because of Ralph's evaluation alone.

Ralph had quite a lot to say about Khurshidul Islam. I recall during one of my now more or less yearly trips to the Sarae, he handed me a thick sheaf of papers. It was an article he had written about Khurshidul Islam and his dealings with him over the years, particularly regarding their collaboration on *Three Mughal Poets* and *Ghalib: Life and Letters*. He gave it to me and said "Keep it but don't publish it, not until I'm gone." (He kept sending me additions to it as further developments took place between the two men.) I have no wish to dwell on what Ralph recorded in this piece (sooner or later it will find its way into print), except to say that when I later read it I felt rather sorry for Ralph. He certainly did not deserve what he had received from a friend he had done so much for. However, what surprised me most was Ralph's tone: nowhere was it sullied with even a hint of ire or sarcasm. The whole piece was refreshingly free of acrimony or maudlin self-pity, or even a feeling of having been wronged, or a desire to get even. It was a bare-bones, unaccented account of what happened, without editorial comment or any kind of judgment.

On the other hand, Ralph never tired of praising Khurshidul Islam for his rather uncommon breadth of knowledge, not just of Urdu and Persian but also Western literature. He clearly admired the man for his penetrating intelligence and sagacity, his erudition and genius. It has never ceased to amaze me how he could so easily banish personal feelings in his transactions with people, so supremely impervious to feeling hurt. Perhaps he never allowed himself to feel hurt. People were what they were, and they certainly were never monochromatic. He appreciated their goodness, and did not let their faults bother him. On occasion, when he did mention some fault, he never called it that. In any case, he especially regretted

the fact that because of Khurshidul Islam's whims their project to collaborate on a series of Urdu translations—of which *Three Mughal Poets* and *Ghalib: Life and Letters* were the first two—could not continue.

The request Ralph made of me regarding his paper on Khurshidul Islam puzzled me then and later. He never said anything about people he could not say to their faces. Why was he asking me not to publish the paper until after he was gone? What added to my puzzlement was that I gradually found out he had given copies of the same paper to many other people (as recently as a few months before his death when he gave one to Ather Farouqui who was then staying at the Sarae and who sent it to me to be published after Ralph died) and had related everything he had written about Khurshidul Islam to just about anybody who would care to listen. I'm still wondering about it.

During his tenure as director of Anjuman-e Taraqqi-e Urdu, Pakistan, Jami-luddin Aali invited Ralph to give a lecture on Iqbal, to be published later as a monograph. Ralph had some difficulty with Iqbal's ideas. Now, everyone in Pakistan worships Iqbal. A whole industry has been built on sanctifying him. Ralph could not have cared less what Pakistanis thought, and Aali had no idea what lay afoot. Ralph said what he had to say, politically correct or not. When the time came to publish the piece, Aali broke into a fine sweat. He kept dragging his feet. Finally when he did print it, he felt compelled to disagree with Ralph in his foreword, most likely to save his skin.

Ralph narrated this tale and added that Aali and he were still good friends, that Aali frequently came to London and stayed at the Sarae. As proof positive of his friendship, Ralph handed me a few pages with his translation of a large number of Aali's *dohās*. I published some of them in the *AUS*.

Urduwallahs were not the only ones Ralph talked about. He told me about some of his colleagues at SOAS, among them Aziz Ahmad, novelist-turned-bureaucrat-turned-historian. Ralph translated his novel *Aisi Bulandi, Aisi Pasti*, in close cooperation with the author, as *The Shore and the Wave* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971). What he related to me can also be found in his introduction to the translation. It is quite revealing, not just about the man but also about how writing is a work in progress. One is never quite done with it, each subsequent visit prompting the inexorable desire to have done it differently.

He [Aziz Ahmad] took the opportunity to make revisions, some of them fairly considerable, in the original text, and these were incorporated in the translation. For the most part, these revisions consist of omissions and abridgements of certain passages, but numerous other minor changes have also been made. Most of these were made at the author's own wish, and

none of them without his consent. In detail, therefore, the translation often diverges considerably from the published text. (*The Shore and the Wave*, 8)

There is one memory that keeps coming back: During our conversations Ralph would stop me and reach out for his pencil and scratch paper (little cuttings saved from unused portions of any paper and pressed with a clip; he also reused envelopes) to jot down a word or a phrase or idiom I had used which he once knew but had long forgotten or which he had never come across. This happened every time, even on my last trip to the Sarae.

Much of what transpired during my visits is not substantially different from what other visitors have experienced and written about. If I want to go over some of these memories, it is not because they are unique, but because it is a way of experiencing the warmth and closeness of a departed friend. In its faltering rhythms memory restores, however imperfectly, what time takes away from us.

In 1990, ten years and seven issues of the *Annual of Urdu Studies* later, Professor C. M. Naim decided to close shop, announcing in a note in the last issue that if someone wanted to continue it, they were free to do so. Something like the *AUS* was sorely needed. I waited three years and then decided to revive it myself. I was at a point in my career where I could indulge in such risky, at times damaging adventures. I soon realized that in addition to good wishes, hard cash and, more importantly, a steady flow of publication-worthy material was needed to turn the *AUS* into a truly professional journal.

During one of my sojourns at the Sarae I asked Ralph if he would consider writing something for it. He gladly accepted and over the years helped the journal *daame, darme, qadame, sukhane*—the hoary cliché we Urduwallahs never tire of repeating. Readers of the *AUS* are familiar with some of the very fine articles he wrote for it, among them his fairly long and now nearly classic “Urdu and I,” and the shorter “Urdu, Khurshidul Islam, and I.” Now and then Ralph would also dig up one of his old translations (originally done for use in his Urdu classes), revise and polish it and send it to me. The one translation that did not fall into this category was the opening section of Krishan Chandar’s semi-autobiographical novel *Meri Yaadon ke Chinaar*. He liked Krishan Chandar immensely and had started translating the novel God knows how long ago. As I accepted the incomplete translation I also insisted that he finish the remainder to be published serially in the *AUS*. He agreed but never got around to fulfilling his promise, despite several reminders and pleas. This was not the only promise that was to remain unfulfilled. There were others too. My feeling is that in the last five or six years his attention was drifting away from writing about or in Urdu, partly because of his preoccupation with his autobiography.

These contributions were a real treat for the *AUS*, but for me personally his informal, unstructured, stray thoughts about Urdu books, Urdu people, their foibles, hypocrisy and double-talk, their cloying *takalluf*, hollow *tapaak*, and oppressive *mubaalgha-aaraa'i*—all of which found such a fluid and easy but non-judgmental expression in his “Shaadam az Zindagi-e Kheesh”—were nothing short of a *ne'mat-e ghair-mutaraqqiba* (I can already see Ralph raising his eyebrows at this expression and snapping with mock disdain, “down right highfalutin”). Many people have told me how much they appreciated his intrepid, off-the-cuff style in this series. I believe what affected them the most was the rare balance of frankness and total absence of ill will that permeated his writing as much as it did his life. That unalloyed, even brutal criticism that never sought to mock or hurt or belittle, so that even if it did not go down well with you, you at least did not feel diminished or slighted or small. I suggested that he write something along these lines in Urdu for each issue of the *AUS*, but the choice of the title for the series was entirely his own. Strangely, when I last visited him in 2007, he was still wondering about the *she'r* in which the phrase “shaadam...” occurs and I had to find out the complete *she'r* for him from Naiyer Masud:

*Haasil-e umr nisaar-e rah-e yaare kardam
Shaadam az zindagi-e kheesh keh kaare kardam.*

The idea resonated with him partly because he had himself been thinking of putting together a collection of his reminiscences focusing on books, personalities, and events that he had found interesting and memorable in his then nearly fifty-five-year-long career as a scholar/teacher of Urdu. The first installment of “Shaadam ...” appeared in the 1998 (No. 13) issue of the *AUS*.

I must confess that a secret reason prompted me to make this suggestion to him. I have often wondered why many non-South Asian scholars of Urdu, despite their considerable scholarship, rarely speak or write in Urdu. I have long felt that informal accounts about the encounter of Western scholars with the land and people of their formal work can provide valuable insights about the latter.

Anyone who speaks Urdu and has come in contact with Ralph knows that he will not let you talk to him in English. Not only would he speak in Urdu but also, depending on how open and informal you wanted to get, unabashedly but lightheartedly share with you some bawdy Urdu jokes rarely heard in the company of our South Asian *shurafa*, certainly not between two people twenty years apart in age. After each joke he would break into full-throated laughter and expect you to do the same. Knowing that I am hell’s fodder, and he being an atheist who could scarcely believe in any retribution other than human, I did not mind his pulling out

a few cassettes from his library and playing some of the choicest examples of the kind of Urdu verse our miscreants classify as—*na'uzu billah—ilaahiyaat*. Ralph was not the only Western scholar I had asked to write something in Urdu about their experiences of South Asia and its people, but he was the only one who went for it. He would send an installment of “Shaadam...” every year—though during the last five years he had started to skip, and the last two installments had to literally be wrenched out of him during my now more or less yearly visits to his restful Sarae. He relented only after I gladly accepted to take dictation.

Ralph's help to the *AUS* was not confined to articles and translations. He introduced it to many of his friends who had some interest in Urdu and actively sought subscribers, sometimes even had me send gift copies to old friends of his in India and to one in Canada. He had more or less adopted it, but the adoption never infringed on my role as editor. At one time he sent me an article which dealt almost exclusively with Urdu instruction in the U.K. I found it too specific to a given situation and decided against publishing it. Another piece, probably sent only a year ago, was a review of the Urdu translation of a play written originally in English. The translation was all right, but nothing memorable, so I gave him my reasons and excused myself.

However, I especially regret the exclusion of one piece, largely because of technical difficulties. It was the B.A. thesis of one of Ralph's former students, Alison Barnsby (now Safadi), entitled “An Analysis of the Linguistic Differences between the Urdu and Hindi Versions of a Selection of Premchand's Short Stories.” “In it,” in Ralph's own words,

she made a detailed study of both the Hindi and the Urdu versions of ten of Prem Chand's short stories, representative of the whole period from 1910 to 1936. Her dissertation covers ninety handwritten pages and provides conclusive proof of the truth of my earlier assertion that Prem Chand's Urdu was standard literary Urdu and his Hindi standard literary Hindi, and that by and large he made no attempt to write in the “Hindustani” he advocated. (It is, I imagine, possible that the Hindi and Urdu versions of the stories are not all Prem Chand's own work, but even if that were the case it seems, to say the least of it, unlikely that either version would have been published without his approval.) Barnsby's study quotes numerous examples of sentences which could equally well be described as Hindi or Urdu but which are *not* used in both versions. (*AUS* 1996, 207)

It was a fine piece of scholarship but interspersed with elements in the Hindi and Urdu scripts as well as numerous linguistic symbols. In those days I typed,

Memon

transliterated, and formatted the material for the *AUS* myself and we did not, nor do we now have software capable of handling all this. I had no way of printing it. For a number of years Ralph said nothing, he only reminded me much later during a stay at his Sarae and I explained the problem.

In the last three or four years Ralph started to ration his time stringently, most probably due to the work he was doing on his autobiography. He had not been well (though the cancer which eventually took him had not been diagnosed yet) and complained of a more than usual fatigue and lack of energy. However, rationing meant just that—rationing, not severance of contact. Henceforward he would write to friends and go to visit those who lived in and around London at set intervals, and pretty much kept to his schedule. The “Journal” he had started writing and sending to friends who requested it was probably a result of his desire to economize time in order to spend it, instead—with frequent interruptions due to fatigue—on his autobiography.

After my last visit to the Sarae in March-April 2007, our e-mail correspondence had become less frequent and more business-like, perhaps due to his newly devised timetable. In an e-mail dated 11 July 2008 he wrote:

Dear Muhammad,

This e-mail begins with a complaint against you. Your last e-mail makes no reference to our agreement made a long time ago that our correspondence would be on the ‘nisf mulaqat’ basis. I consider that by sending you my journal I fulfil my part of the bargain, and I consider that you don’t fulfil your part. Sometime I’ll tell you why I think this may have happened, but in the meanwhile let me say that I don’t understand why I had to wait to hear from Anis about your travels and your very satisfactory visit to Turkey. So please mend your ways from now on.

Yours,
Ralph

I wrote back to him, somewhat testily, that there was absolutely no such agreement, and even if he had suggested one along those lines, I would never have agreed to it. Given the infrequency of his e-mails, I had myself suggested that he write to me at least once every six months, if not more. (And by “write” I meant a real, personal letter.) In the same message I also asked a second time for the last installment of “Shaadam...,” which he had himself offered to write but had never sent. While I regretted my testiness, at the time I had not wished to give the slight-

est impression that anything had changed in my behavior now that he had six to eight months. He replied on 12 August, one month before he passed away, with his characteristic generosity:

OK. There's absolutely no ill feeling. I'll write again quite soon (I hope) BUT THE PROOFS OF part 2 of my autobiography have just arrived and I'm giving priority to the possibly quite lengthy task of correcting the pagination of a long index. So be patient! All the best. Yours, Ralph.

This was Ralph, very much himself.

*

A small life such as mine, Ralph, so limited in every way, is hardly qualified to judge the measure of a life so full and warm and rich and human as yours. Jane Shum, who transcribed your *AUS* articles from the tapes, recently wrote to me:

Though I never met him, I personally have the impression that Ralph Russell was a man of the heart, a man who knew the "true meaning of life" and who saw through all the rubbish most people waste their lives pursuing. This despite being an "atheist."

And lest this account become mushy or maudlin (I know you would not like that), let me smile, as you would be, thinking that just as the earthly *mehvash* and *parichehras* could not resist the seduction of your formidable charms and you theirs, the houris too must find them pleasing enough to defect their Islamic heaven and join you in your cubicle, wherever it may be.

I would love to conclude by "haq maghfirat kare 'ajab aazaad mard tha!" but I'm afraid. I could faintly hear you admonish me with a smile: "What's this *haq-vaq*. Don't you know I don't believe in your Haq?" Yes, I know you don't, Ralph. But consider who said it—the bard you loved, Ghalib. It is *his* Haq. You're in good company! Good-bye, old friend.

Ralph Russell: Teacher, Scholar, and Friend

By Marion Molteno

Wherever Urdu is spoken Ralph Russell will be remembered as an Englishman who loved Urdu. He had an exceptional command of the language, loved speaking it, and enjoyed meeting Urdu speakers of every section of society. He studied Urdu literature, not just as an academic pursuit but to find in it reflections of experience that would be valuable to him in his own life. Through his writing and translations he made ghazal poetry intelligible to thousands of readers for whom it would otherwise have remained inaccessible.

He had a huge impact as a teacher. He developed a highly effective style of teaching the language to English speakers, first at university level, and then, when large numbers of South Asians came to settle in Britain, in the wider community. Through the courses he initiated, thousands of English speakers learnt to speak Urdu at a basic level, which had a transformational effect on their relationships with people in communities of Pakistani origin in Britain. He also became concerned about the loss of language by children in immigrant communities, and campaigned for Urdu and other minority languages to be taught within the British education system.

To those lucky enough to know him personally, he was a stimulating colleague, generous in his appreciation, outspoken when he felt the need to be so. He was an inspirational mentor to hundreds of people who were working in similar fields, each of whom felt individually supported to become what they might otherwise not have been. He was a man of deeply felt humanist convictions and clear moral principles, who brought this understanding to bear on all aspects of his life. And with all that, he was an intensely loving and fun-loving friend.

That he achieved so much, and worked with such long-term dedication at the tasks he had set himself, reflects the kind of person he was. In his autobiography, *Findings Keepings*, Ralph wrote:

There have been three main strands of my life: the commitment to the fundamental values which made me a communist, the study of Urdu, and an aware-

ness of love as the fundamental feature of true humanity... To me the three strands have always been inextricably intertwined, each informing the other.

Francis Robinson, a historian of Islam in South Asia, has neatly summarised the effect of this ‘intertwining’:¹

These interacting strands are key to understanding the nature and direction of Ralph’s academic work. His communism led to his study of Urdu so that he could communicate with his Indian sepoy [when posted to the Indian army during WWII]. His belief in love led him, amongst other things, to focus on the great Urdu love poets, in particular Ghalib. His belief in the service of his fellow human beings meant that his academic work had to be socially useful. So his work on Urdu literature was designed to make it accessible to those who knew nothing of the Urdu literary tradition. So his teaching of Urdu language was designed to produce students who could begin to speak the language from the very first class, and make it work for them in their daily lives.

Ralph was, above all, someone who loved people, and for whom that love was both wide and deep. With Hasrat Mohani he believed that

All love is unconditionally good,
Be it for God, be it for human beauty.

For Ralph this was no simplistic form of words. His belief in the value of love informed both his personal and his working life, and was a key factor in his passionately held interpretation of the Urdu ghazal, which became the centre-piece of his work in Urdu literature. It appealed to him strongly that the beloved of the ghazal could be interpreted either as a human beloved or in a mystical sense. To people who knew that he was an atheist it seemed surprising that he was so at home with the concept of the love of God as expressed in the ghazal. To him it presented no difficulty. He understood it as a commitment to high ideals, of which he had plenty, or a sense of universal love, something that in earlier times could only have been understood in religious terms, but that today can also bear a humanist inter-

pretation. In the same way he would happily sing the Christian hymns he had been brought up with and give a human rather than divine interpretation to words such as

Surely thy sweet and wondrous love
Shall measure all my days.

A basic tenet of his belief was that love is indivisible. He was distressed that Faiz, with whom he in other respects shared a great deal – they were both progressive in political outlook, and both deeply familiar with the ghazal tradition - should have written the poem

Mujh se pehli si muhabbat, meri mahbub, na maang -
My love, do not ask me for that former love again -

in which the poet tells his beloved that he now has to give his energy to a political struggle, so will be less able to give his beloved full commitment. To Ralph it made no sense to think of love as something finite, where if you gave more in one direction there would be less available for another. To him love was a way of being, and the more you practiced it, in *all* your relationships and *all* your undertakings, the more it would grow, and the greater would be your power for good.

And that is how he lived his own life. He committed himself fully to his political values, giving time and energy to working for things he believed in, being outspoken even though it cost him other people's approval or professional advancement. For sixty years he seemed tireless in his dedicated work for Urdu, and during that time listened to and encouraged literally hundreds of people in their own endeavours, giving each his full attention. And to the remarkably large number of people with whom he had a strong personal relationship, he was an irreplaceable spirit, a very special friend.

Each person who knew Ralph will have their own story, their own way of remembering him. Here are a few memories from people who knew him in the decades before I met him. Chris Freeman was a life-long friend, starting from the days when they were both students in the Communist Party in Cambridge. They later shared a house for some years:

During the war [when he was posted in India] he wrote lovely letters which taught me about India and about Urdu and world literature. One of his many fine characteristics was that he educated not only his students but his friends too. An-

other which made him an exceptional and wonderful person was that he remained true to the ideals of his youth throughout his life and lived by those ideals. This did not make him a dogmatic ideologist because he always kept his sense of humour even about his own beliefs. He always sang as he did household chores, often parodies of revolutionary songs, which he made up himself.

Chris's daughter, Susie, who was a child in that shared household, said When I think of Ralph it makes me smile. He was a rare and wonderful person who exuded love, and happy love at that!

Ursula Rothen Dubs was one of his earliest students at SOAS, the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he headed the Urdu department for thirty years. She remembers the vivid way he introduced her to Urdu literature.² As she read her way slowly through the prescribed texts he said,

‘At this speed you will never get through them all, so I’ll read them out to you’ which he proceeded to do throughout the four years. And how Ralph enjoyed himself! How he laughed at Khoji’s misdeeds! How he enjoyed Nazir’s market scenes! So much so that instead of looking at the text I watched Ralph’s face as he read. How he suffered with the unfortunate lovers! How he filled the bare little winter room with the garden greenery and the mauve clouds of the rainy season! How he felt with the lovers, the indifference of their various beloveds and at the imaginative doings of the revolving heavens! Ralph did teach, yes. Unforgettable his way of getting through all those drawn-out relative sentences, but even more he *lived* Urdu literature and made a student feel the innermost emotions of the writers and poets. My life has been enriched ever since. The feelings of mankind are the same the world over; poets of different cultures just find different words for expressing them. Thank you, Ralph, for making me realize this.

Ibadat Brelvi, an Urdu scholar whom Ralph first met in Delhi immediately after Partition and who subsequently moved to Pakistan, worked alongside Ralph at SOAS in the 1960s. His home in Lahore was Ralph’s base whenever he visited Pakistan. He wrote a chapter on his impressions of Ralph which give a vivid picture of his extraordinary capacity for work, his puckish delight in verbal play in

Urdu, and his openness to enjoying life in a Pakistani village. (A translation was published in the 2009 issue of *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, along with many other tributes to Ralph. www.urdustudies.com)

Sughra Choudhry was one of the first of the second generation of Pakistanis settled in Britain who came to study Urdu in SOAS. She went on to teach it, and then to become chief executive of the Aga Khan Educational Services in Pakistan. Ralph became for her a life-long mentor:³

He was the most approachable of lecturers and showed a real interest in his students' personal as well as professional lives. As a British born Pakistani of Kashmiri origin, learning Urdu was a 'returning to roots' experience for me. I admired his immense knowledge of Urdu and Urdu literature and his cool ability to appreciate as if from within and yet be able to stand outside and criticise with reason. Facilitated by discussions with Ralph, I learnt to take what I needed to take from both my cultures and to adapt or reject things I questioned.

Terry Byres, an economic historian of South Asia, was for years Ralph's colleague at SOAS and a member of the SOAS Left Group which Ralph led during the rapidly changing political context of the 1970s. He remembers him as

a brilliant organizer. He was articulate to a marked degree, and he was indomitable. He was fiercely honest and a loyal friend. It was a great privilege to have worked with him and to have been his friend.

My own first meeting with Ralph was in 1982, a year after he had retired from SOAS and was very busy running Urdu courses for people outside the university. I was in a way typical of the kinds of people he was now teaching. I was running English classes for women who had come from elsewhere to live in Britain, many from India and Pakistan, and I wanted to put my relationships with the students in our classes on a more equal basis by learning one of their languages while I was teaching mine. But after two years of trying to learn Hindi on my own, while I could struggle through reading and writing at a basic level I could still hardly speak two sentences confidently. I was depressed about my lack of progress, and feeling I was failing at something that was potentially important. Then I saw Ralph at work

and, like many others, knew immediately that this was someone who could help me get there. I asked him, if I switched to Urdu, would he take me on. He used to laughingly tell the story of how he responded – he said that the only time he could possibly fit me in would be before breakfast once a week. I instantly agreed. He was amused that I was so keen – I was amazed at my luck that he had said yes. Within half a year my latent knowledge of Hindi had been transformed, and I could chat to people in Urdu about everyday things.

He was an extraordinary one-to-one teacher, effortlessly zoning in to the appropriate level for each learner, and making his interest in talking to you so obvious that it overrode the difficulties, and you found you could respond, far more than you had thought your struggling brain was capable of. He had also prepared a course book so well suited to the context that I and others like me were learning in, and so linguistically thorough, that we could work through it on our own between lessons and surprise ourselves with our progress.

Then, with hardly time for me to breathe in-between, he persuaded me to co-teach with him on a beginners' Urdu course. The courses he had pioneered had become so popular that he alone could not meet the demand. The reason was clear – his methods *worked*, unlike those of many well-meaning Pakistani teachers in adult education classes who used the methods they had grown up with, that is, starting with the alphabet. Typically half the class would drift off in frustration before they had learnt to speak one sentence. Ralph got complete beginners talking from the word go, and didn't bother them with the script unless they said had reasons for wanting to learn to read. Most didn't – they just wanted to be able to talk to people from India and Pakistan whom they were meeting in their daily lives. Ralph travelled all over the country to teach groups who invited him, and didn't bother whether he was paid or not. And to help him meet the growing demand, he launched his own more advanced students into being co-teachers, using his course materials.

When he suggested I start teaching alongside him I was stunned. I told him it was impossible – my Urdu was no way near fluent enough. He said, 'You only have to be fluent in what's in Part I of my course, and you are that already.' He won, and I joined his growing team, and got drawn into six years of using holidays and weekends teaching on intensive Urdu courses.

Neither I nor the others would have stuck with it if it had not been so much fun. Ralph just had a way of making the most serious endeavour enjoyable. The ones I remember best are the week long residential courses at Chorley College in Lancashire, where most of the learners were teachers in schools with large numbers of children from Pakistani families, many of whom knew no English when they first arrived at school. There were three or more courses a year through most of the

1980s, and many of the same people used to come back each time, and in between courses would get together with friends from the course to keep practicing. I was helping Ralph teach and my own Urdu was pushing ahead through the experience. By the end of each week's course we were all on a high – we felt we had been on an amazing journey together, and that something which had previously seemed unattainable was increasingly within our grasp, if we could just go on working at it. The unique nature of that experience, shared so intensely with each other, was something none of us could adequately explain to the partners and friends we went back to. Special friendships formed among us, and Ralph was the delightful magician who had made it all happen - through the systematic logic of his course materials, the effectiveness of his teaching style, but just as much through his pleasure in all of us and the sense of fun he generated.

Jill Matthews, a teacher who had helped set up the Chorley courses, describes the atmosphere:

We were devoted to his teachings because in learning the language we better understood the culture. 'Them' versus 'us' went out the window along with stereotypes and sanctimonious platitudes. We came away from the Chorley College courses exhilarated because we had been so real and alive.

Jill Catlow, another regular Chorley attender, remembers:

I loved the way our lessons were interspersed with insights into Urdu speakers' culture and way of life, both here in the UK and in Pakistan. These were sometimes very funny, such as his story about the All Asia Engineering Company which was a small bicycle repair shop run by one of his friends; sometimes empathetic, such as stories about well qualified people living in this country who were unable to get suitable employment due to discriminatory policies. Sometimes the insights were linked to the language structures we were learning. I particularly remember realising how many things that we express actively in English are expressed passively in Urdu and pondering on whether this in fact reflected or indeed promoted a fatalistic way of viewing life's twists and

turns - if Allah wills it or Inshallah! Lateness, marriage, pregnancy and broken pencils are all things that just happen to us. Knowledge comes to us, or perhaps in some cases doesn't!

It was great to go away from the Chorley residential courses and immediately be able to try out what I had learned with the children I taught, with their parents, with local shop keepers, taxi drivers and Urdu speaking colleagues. Most importantly Ralph was genuinely interested in each and every one of his students, which made us all feel very special indeed.

There were Chorley in-jokes and vocabulary, often centred around the personality of Ralph. One was about his openly expressed pleasure in being surrounded by a group of students who were mostly women – whom Jill Matthews called his 'harem'. With his preference for one-to-one teaching he managed to make each of them feel that he was teaching them individually. Someone said it was like Krishna and the *gopis* - all these women hanging on his every word, and each thinking she was the only one he was dancing with. Another was about the Roman transcriptions of the sounds of Urdu, devised by Firth but which Ralph popularised in his courses. Ralph insisted that we learn to use the transcription accurately, to be sure we would be pronouncing new words correctly. The script became known as the *Ralphabet*, or *Ralphy* for short. When one of the teachers used a word that was new to the students, they would say, 'Can you write that for me in Ralphy?'

The fact that he was an internationally known scholar of Urdu, and was here spending his efforts teaching at a basic level that carried no status in academic eyes did not worry Ralph in the slightest. He loved the engagement with so many different people, and was delighted that so many English speakers *wanted* to learn to communicate with Urdu speakers. He once wrote that Urdu speakers 'have taught me more than I could have ever expected. I want to help others, at *every* level, to have access to what Urdu speaking people can give to them, and a means of communicating what they in turn can give to Urdu-speaking people.'

During those same years Ralph was engaged in 101 tasks to do with encouraging the teaching of Urdu in schools. He had formed a National Council of Urdu Teaching and applied to it not only the meticulous attention to detail for which he was well known, but also the considerable skills in political leadership he had developed as a student organizer in the Communist Party, and applied later among left-wing academics in British universities. His work in the National Council for Urdu

Teaching tapped into all those qualities, and he needed his sense of humour in this context every bit as much as in his days of challenging the Communist Party hierarchy. Many of the Pakistani-origin teachers he was working with had a great deal invested in their professional standing and resented any challenge to their expertise. Only a minority were seriously interested in trying to adjust their traditional methods, acquired in Pakistani schools decades earlier, to the totally different context of children of Pakistani families growing up in Britain.

Over the years I saw Ralph often in situations where he was working with such teachers, and was always amazed at how comfortably he managed what could have been tense relationships. The basis of it was his genuine interest in each person he was talking to. It was obvious that he really wanted to hear the story of how they had each got into this work and what they were trying to do. He was appreciative of effort and made people feel recognized. But he never backed away from the task of challenging people's approaches if he thought that necessary. His standing as a scholar of Urdu gave him a unique legitimacy, but his success came as much from the way he had of being completely frank while remaining warm and respectful to the person whose work he was challenging. There was always lots of laughter in these exchanges, and much quoting of Urdu poetry. That his interventions were received in the spirit in which they were given was shown by the fact that scores of teachers came to him to talk about the difficulties they faced, and sent him their materials to comment on. Mahfooz Hussain, a Lancashire Pakistani who co-taught on the courses in Chorley, said, 'Ralph was wonderful and influenced my life immensely. I still think of him as the most charismatic person I ever met and had the pleasure to work with.'

Apart from his influence on scores of individuals, Ralph's political understanding made him alert also to the structural pressures which put obstacles in the way of Urdu being effectively taught. He sat on committees to reform the public examination structure to bring Urdu into line with other modern languages. He advised the education authorities in cities where he had contacts through the National Council, and gave lectures on the cultural backgrounds and educational needs of South Asian communities, leaving behind an atmosphere of much greater openness. One manager of a multi-cultural unit in Waltham Forest said she wished she could carry him around in her pocket as a resource. His own personal input was always in relation to Urdu, but the work had spin-off effects for the teaching of all minority languages.

One activity to which he devoted hours of time was meeting publishers who were willing to produce simple bi-lingual stories for primary-age children, and painstakingly checking the Urdu translations himself. It all seemed natural at the time, part of his bigger task of encouraging bi-lingualism. I think back to it now

and wonder whether there was ever another scholar of his standing who would have given time to this while he was still engaged in translating Ghalib.

During the 1990s Ralph retired from most of these activities to concentrate on completing his work on Urdu literature, and to write his autobiography. But people kept coming to him, he took on new students in his home, and to his last days he never stopped being engaged, never stopped feeling intensely interested in everyone he was with. Mohammad Talib, an anthropology fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, came to know Ralph only in his last year when he was already very frail. He said that seeing Ralph in that state summon his energy to teach and interact with other people made him understand the concept of ‘non-alienation’ ! Sheila Rosenberg asked if she could visit him to get advice about something she was writing. It was her first visit, and turned out to be just three weeks before he died:

He was so warm, welcoming and knowledgeable. He taught me a lot but was also interested in my project. He invited me to call again in a month’s time. And I am writing this now instead. I shall always value that afternoon visit.

To all the people who never met him personally, Ralph’s lasting contribution will be through his writing. There are many fine scholars of Urdu literature, and Ralph always stressed that those who had grown up with Urdu as their mother tongue, in families where Urdu poetry was constantly quoted, were bound to have a knowledge of Urdu literature more extensive and more rooted than his. But as an English speaker who had come to Urdu only as an adult, he brought something unique, which in the end enabled him to open up the riches of Urdu literature to thousands of new readers.

From the early 1950s when he began his fruitful collaboration with Khurshidul Islam, Ralph had a clear sense of what should be the central focus of his life’s work – to provide English translations of a quality that would make it possible for people who did not know Urdu to appreciate some of its greatest literature.

The most challenging part of that task, and the one closest to his heart, was to present the ghazal poets, Mir and Ghalib, whose poetry had greatly enriched his own understanding of life. In his landmark essay, *The pursuit of the Urdu ghazal*, he described his initial difficulties in appreciating the ghazal, and how he eventually

found his way through them. He drew creatively on that experience to make ghazal poetry intelligible to others who like him had to approach it from the outside.

By 1969 he and Khurshid had produced their two great books, *Three Mughal Poets* and *Ghalib, Life and Letters*, which are probably still the books for which Ralph is best known. *Three Mughal Poets* includes three chapters on Mir which were largely Ralph's work. They were my first introduction to ghazal poetry, and I still feel they provide the most effective way of presenting it, not only to anyone new to Urdu, but also to the increasing number of people who have grown up in an Urdu speaking environment but don't know much about ghazal poetry.

Ghalib, Life and Letters, gives a vivid reconstruction of Ghalib's life through translations of his letters and diaries. He and Khurshid thought of it as Volume 1 of a three volume work on Ghalib, and started work on the second volume, which would include translations of the most significant verses from all Ghalib's ghazals. They worked on this for decades, and it became the central focus of Ralph's work on literature. Khurshid would come to Britain, Ralph would go to India, and they would sit together meticulously going through each verse, making sure that Ralph understood all the nuances of each Urdu or Persian couplet before he began work on his translations. From the mid 1980s Ralph felt their work was nearly complete, but Khurshid was never willing to agree that they were ready to publish, nor yet willing to make time to complete it. In the end Ralph began to publish some of his translations on his own, over thirty years after they had begun work on them. An initial short selection was published in India in 2000 as *The Famous Ghalib*, with the Urdu original alongside the English translation, and transcriptions in Devanagari and Roman script, thus making it accessible to the widest possible readership. The full collection was finally published in 2003 – in Pakistan as *The Seeing Eye* (published by Alhamra), and in India as part of *The Oxford India Ghalib*, (Oxford University Press.) For anyone who knows some Urdu, the Alhamra edition is the more satisfying because it gives the Urdu/Persian verses alongside the English translations.

Ralph accompanied his translations with interpretative essays which illuminated the traditional ghazal concepts, and a chapter called *On translating Ghalib* in which he wrote perceptively about the barriers to translation and his approach to getting round them. He put the highest value on faithfulness to the *sense* of the original but did not try to replicate Urdu's poetic diction, convinced that for English readers flowery language was more likely to diminish the power of the verse than enhance it. His translations seem at first reading deceptively simple, but they have an uncluttered precision, and the more you read them the more you become aware of how the subtleties have been captured.

Meanwhile Ralph had begun bringing together the many articles and translations of other Urdu writers that he had produced over the years. These were published in the UK and India as *The Pursuit of Urdu literature: a select history* in 1992 and *Hidden in the lute: An Anthology of Urdu Literature* in 1995. He used translated extracts to share his eclectic enjoyment of literature of all kinds, from the religious leader, Khwaja Hasan Nizami's chatty guidance to his followers on everyday matters, to Rusva's taboo-breaking story of a Lucknow courtesan, *Umrao Jan Ada*. In 20th C literature he translated stories by many of the writers linked to the Progressive Writers Movement, most of whom he knew personally and with whom he shared a political outlook. The stories he chose reflected their and his shared empathy with people of all kinds, and strongly held humane values. He also wrote perceptively about the movement itself. The only full-length prose works he translated were his colleague Aziz Ahmad's novel *Aisi Bulandi, Aisi Pasti* (with the English title, *The Shore and the Wave*), and Anis Qidvai's moving memoirs of the Partition period, *In Freedom's Shadow*. As a translator of prose he had an extraordinary facility. I have heard him dictate a translation straight onto cassette as his eyes read the Urdu original. He would afterwards get it transcribed and would correct it in his usual meticulous way, but the flow and the instinctive matching of idioms was there first time round.

There are still few English speakers who have any idea of Urdu literature, and Ralph's books never reached a mass audience. But their impact on those who have found them has been powerful. Helen Goodway is one such person. She describes her excitement at discovering *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature* in her local library at a stage when she knew very little about Urdu literature – she later went on to co-edit the Urdu/English journal *Tadeeb*. She admits to having deprived other readers in her home town of access to the book for quite a while by renewing it seventeen times!

It has been of profound importance for me. It is subtitled *A Select History* but, whatever else I read on the subject, it is this work which provides the framework of knowledge on which to rest everything else. I made an unannounced approach to Ralph. His response to my enquiries was immediately fertile, generous and encouraging to all aspects of my journey [in discovering Urdu literature.] Part of the beauty of *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature* is the limpid clarity of its language. I understand that Ralph is renowned for the clarity and beauty of his use of Urdu. The quality

of directness, that lies at the heart of his linguistic powers, matches, I think, his character as an honest human being.

The people Ralph hoped to reach through his translations and writing were not just those who knew nothing about Urdu. He hoped also that his books would be read by South Asians who for whatever reason would find it difficult to appreciate Urdu literature in its original form. He wrote for Urdu speakers in Pakistan and India who have been English-medium educated and can more easily read English novels than Urdu poetry, for a second and third generation settled in Britain or the USA, who cannot read the Urdu script and may even have lost the ability to speak Urdu, but want to know about its literature. And also for the many people in India or in Indian communities elsewhere who don't know Urdu but know that it has a rich poetic tradition and want to find out about it. One such person is Deepak Kripilani. Growing up in Bombay with no apparent Urdu influences, he was fascinated by the lyrics of Hindi film songs, which he then discovered had often been written by Urdu poets. That led to a desire to read Urdu poetry directly. Some way along that journey

I discovered Ralph Russell on a late November afternoon in 1991. I came across his book *Three Mughal Poets* (co-authored by Khurshidul Islam) in Delhi - a first-of-its-kind Urdu-English translation of the classical poets. The thing that struck me was the ability of the authors to reconstruct and bring alive the lives of Mir, Sauda and Mir Dard and the times they lived in. It was both fascinating and engrossing. The narrative catered to my interest in history as well, the difference being the perspective, poets in place of kings, noblemen and invaders.

Then came *Ghalib-Life and Letters*, the most detailed account I have come across of the poet's life and the social and political milieu of those times. Only a personal diary could have gotten closer.

Three Mughal Poets whetted my appetite for the main course - *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature* - two years later. The treatment of the subject going back several hundred years was unlike anything I had come across before, and was presented in

an easy-to-understand, chatty style. It combined the knowledge of an expert with the tone of a guide and the familiarity of a favourite uncle who took you as a child to the ice cream vendor or the cricket ground.

But Ralph did not speak only to newcomers to Urdu. There are countless Urdu speakers who are well read in its literature, who have loved his books and have learnt from them things they had did not know or had not thought about before. Rashid Qureshi described him as ‘a literary giant, whose command of Ghalib’s poetry was phenomenal.’ Ashraf Faruqi, now at the University of North Carolina, has a vivid memory from 1960 when he as a child listened to Ralph discussing literary matters with his father, Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi, then head of the Department of Urdu at Delhi University:

I was mesmerized by his eloquent conversation in chaste Urdu. He spoke the language with perfect accent and fluency. The book *Mir Taqi Mir: Hayat aur Shairi* which my father wrote became the topic of many discussions and meetings at our house. Later as a graduate student at Duke University in the 1970s I read his masterpieces *Three Mughal Poets* and *Ghalib: Life and Letters*. Both are beautifully conceived books with excellent commentary. I also remember reading his brilliant translation of Ismat Chughtai’s short story *Nanhi ki Naani*, with the title *Tiny’s Aunt*.

Asad Abbas, a psychologist from Pakistan now living in London, has read everything that Ralph has written, and regularly used to visit him to discuss the many points that stimulated him in them. Here is one example:

In one of his writings he mentioned a book of folk stories which I had never heard of and which he had cited as an example of popular culture. I asked him where I could buy a copy in Pakistan and he replied that I could find it on any bookstall in a railway station. To me it was a perfect example of how he took an interest in whatever surrounded him and was open to any experience. I had always simply assumed that books sold in a station would be of no interest to me.

Ralph's writing extended beyond the traditional scope of literature, to critical essays on aspects of South Asian society and politics. As in all other spheres of life, he was always willing to tackle controversy head on – in fact it was often the fact that a topic was controversial that motivated him to write about it. A fine example is his essay *Maududi and Islamic Obscurantism*, published in *How not to write the history of Urdu literature* in 1999 but written before the rise of fundamentalism had hit the headlines. It ends

And that is why Maududi's movement needs to be taken seriously – and vigorously combatted.

In the aftermath of the Salman Rushdie fatwa he much regretted the fact that Muslims who did *not* support the fundamentalists were not willing to say so publicly. So he took it on himself to try to raise the debate. Through a series of articles in *Jang*, the Urdu language daily newspaper in the UK, he stressed the 'other Islam' which was there for Muslims to draw on, one which was strongly humanist and upheld religious tolerance – as expressed by the great ghazal poets.

In a blog on 'Governance in Pakistan' the writer 'South Asian' holds up Ralph's article *Strands of Muslim Identity* to students as an example of clear, well argued analysis, and also of honesty:

It was from him that I picked up the line: 'Do you want me to say what I think or what you want to hear?' In another of his essays, Professor Russell says 'I sometimes have the impression that in the field of Islamic studies more than most, scholars feel a need to be 'diplomatic' (which, let us face it, is only a polite way of saying 'less than completely honest') so that influential people will not be offended.' And then he refers to Thomas Hardy in the Explanatory Note to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, that 'if an offence comes out of the truth, better it is that the offence come out than that the truth be concealed.'

Ralph was never inhibited by a concern for what Urdu scholars might think when he, an Englishman, expressed forthright views on topics they might be expected to be the experts on. He simply assumed that such relationships would be on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and they almost always were. Shamsur Rahman

Farouqi, whom Ralph only met once but whose erudition he much admired, ended a keynote address to the Urdu fest at the University of Virginia in Sept 2008 with a tribute to Ralph, knowing that he was seriously ill but not that he had already died:

I cannot conclude this section without paying sincere tribute to Ralph Russell for his erudition, forthrightness, and his services to the cause of extending appreciation for Urdu literature in the western world and even in South Asia. His essay about how not to write a history of Urdu literature is just one example of how his teachings and ideas can benefit native Urdu readers and writers.

Ralph once said that a suitable summary of his approach to life was contained in a Persian couplet which he translated as

I live, and suffer censure, and am happy
For in my creed to grieve is blasphemy.

He lived in the way he thought right, committed to the values he believed in, and giving his energy for something he hoped would bring benefit to others. If any of that brought him censure, well, too bad. Though he was widely referred to by Urdu speakers as Professor Russell, SOAS in fact never made him a professor, and it was no secret that this was because he was a communist. His colleagues thought this a scandal. Ralph was philosophical – it was important mainly because it showed up the political attitudes of the university establishment; for himself, he really didn't care what title he had. In his later years his colleague Khalid Hasan Qadiri made repeated efforts to get a leading Pakistani university to award Ralph an honorary doctorate. It was subsequently revealed that the nomination had been blocked by someone on the board because Ralph was known to be an atheist and '*vuh Iqbal nahin mante*' – he didn't revere Iqbal. Qadiri, himself a devout Muslim and Pakistani nationalist, was outraged – What had religion and Iqbal got to do with assessing Ralph Russell's contribution to Urdu studies? Ralph himself was touched at Qadiri's efforts and reaction, but the significance for him was what it revealed about political attitudes; an honorary doctorate as such was unimportant to him.

In some respects he faced an opposite hazard. Given the degree of public admiration he received from people in the Urdu speaking world, and the extraordi-

nary spread of his influence, it seems remarkable how free he remained of any trace of self-importance. He didn't undervalue either himself or his work, and of course he loved it if other people appreciated it, but the point of it was always *the work itself*, not any praise or recognition it might bring him. Some years before his death he was awarded the prestigious *Sitara-e-imtiyaz* by the Pakistan government. So little did this register with him that his children only found out that it had happened when they saw it in an obituary. One of the sayings he liked was

neki kar, awr dariya men dal
Do good, and throw it in the river.

He continued teaching and writing until a month before his death at the age of 90. He wrote from a conviction that it was important to share what he understood and believed, regardless of whether he could be sure it would be published. There was a Sanskrit verse he particularly liked, by Bhavabhuti, translated by John Brough who had been his teacher in SOAS. He used to laugh about the fact that Brough had said Sanskrit poetry could not be translated, and then had produced some wonderful translations . Bhavabhuti says:

If learned critics publicly deride
My verse, well, let them. Not for them I wrought.
One day a man shall live to share my thought:
For time is endless, and the world is wide.

Those of us who knew and loved Ralph, or have absorbed something of his spirit through his writing, will continue to be influenced by the things he shared with us – about how to be open to people, how to learn from literature, and how to live. His friend Asad Abbas wrote, 'I can't imagine a time when I will cease to miss him.' That is true for many of us. But in Ghalib's words, and Ralph's translation,

Gham nahin hota hay azadon ko besh az yak nafas
Barq se karte hayn rawshan e shama matam khana ham

We who are free grieve only for a moment
And use the lightning's flash to light our homes.

Notes:

¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from personal tributes received shortly after Ralph's death, Sept 2009.

² Contribution to a day conference in SOAS in June 2007, celebrating Ralph's life and work.

³ Contribution to the SOAS day, see 2 above.

Donor-driven Participatory Forest Management and ‘Local Social Realities’: Insights from Pakistan¹

By Babar Shahbaz² and Tanvir Ali³

1. Introduction

Decentralisation and devolution are the leading themes in ongoing discussions of forest policy and natural resource management throughout the world (Ribot 2002). In most developing countries, decentralised or participatory forestry policies have emerged in response to ‘institutional failure’ regarding sustainable management of forest resources (Dupar and Badenoch 2002; Siry et al. 2005), and Pakistan is no exception. The failure of the state’s forest authorities in reducing deforestation, and conflicts between the state and local people, have brought into focus the inefficiency of the top-down system of forest management (Iqbal 2000; Khattak 2002). In response to this, various donor-funded participatory forestry projects were implemented specifically in the forest-rich North- West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan during the 1980s and 1990s. The most recent of these was the Forestry Sector Project, which was started in 1996, funded by the Asian Development Bank, and in which the participatory approach to forest management was formally institutionalised.

In the process of implementation, however, such participatory approaches encountered ‘local social realities’: the realities of forest use and related decision-making are shaped by local interests, customs and traditions. A whole range of actors are part of these realities, ranging from representatives of ‘traditional’ forest management paradigms to more recent civil society organisations and private sector entities.

This paper provides an exploratory analysis of Pakistan’s model of decentralised forest management by adopting a perspective that focuses on these actors. More specifically, it addresses the following questions:

- How is participatory forest management put into practice in the NWFP?
- What is the extent of participation by various actors?
- What is the extent of the relationships and what are the levels of trust between various actors and the state?

- What lessons have been learnt and which entry points can be identified for improving the effectiveness of participatory forest management?

To answer these questions, the present article is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the dominant institutional paradigms of the forestry sector of the NWFP. Section 3 introduces the emergence of participatory approaches, and focuses on the procedures adopted in the Forestry Sector Project (FSP). The encounter of the FSP with local social realities is detailed in section 4 and discussed in section 5. Finally, section 6 draws conclusions and points out some lessons to be learnt.

2. Dominant forest management paradigms

Natural forests cover about 4.8% of the total land area of Pakistan, with about 40% of these forests located in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) – hence the focus on this region in the present paper. The NWFP is home to approximately 18 million people. Almost two-thirds of the population trace their origins to Afghanistan and Central Asia. They speak the *Pushto* language and write in an Arabic script; *Hindko*, *Gojri* and *Kohistani* are other important languages spoken in this province (IUCN 1996).

There is a large variety of tree species because of the province's great physiographic and climatic contrasts. Besides providing a range of direct benefits to people, these forests also protect the country's fragile watersheds, which yield hydropower and water for the large agricultural economy in the rest of country. These benefits are in danger, as Pakistan has a very high rate of deforestation, with 39,000 hectares of forests vanishing annually. Between the years 1990 and 2000, the deforestation rate in Pakistan was estimated at 1.5% annually (FAO 2005).

2.1 State forest administration

According to the constitution of Pakistan, forestry is a provincial matter. The federal government is responsible for liaison with international agencies, ensuring compliance with international treaties, etc. The provincial government of the NWFP manages the forests through the Department of Forests, Wildlife and Fisheries (DFFW), headed by the Conservator of Forests and with a hierarchy of lower officials. The department's activities are guided by the legal provisions of provincial forestry laws. According to existing regulations, the forests of the NWFP are divided between public (state-owned) and private forests (non-state). These are further divided into subcategories. The main categories of public forests are "Reserved" and "Protected". The provincial government, through the DFFW, has proprietary rights to the Reserved Forests, and various activities by the local people

such as clearing land, cutting trees or harvesting forest products are prohibited. However, unregulated grazing and removal of dry fuel wood is practised by communities (Ahmed and Mahmood 1998). In the Protected Forests, local people have more rights, such as a share in timber sale proceeds, use of timber and fuel wood, grazing rights for animals, etc. The main category of private forests is made up of the *guzara* (subsistence) forests, which are either managed by communities as communal property or held privately. Usually, some village members have user rights while others do not, and the DFFW regulates the removal of timber for commercial as well as local use.

Across South Asia (including Pakistan), the concept of forest management has been heavily influenced by the British colonial administration (Iqbal 2000; Poffenberger 2000). The first forest legislation along modern lines was promulgated in 1878 (Indian Forest Act) in order to regulate logging, and the first Indian forest policy was announced in 1894. These pieces of legislation brought the major portion of the forests under government control, with limited rights given to local people, whereas the role of the Forest Department was to police the forests in addition to regulating tree felling.

In 1849, the regions covered by the present-day NWFP came under British rule, and thus forest management became a centralised state matter in this province as well – except in some of the forest-rich mountain areas to the north-west of the Indus River, where princely states continued in power until 1969. In the other areas of present-day Pakistan, the Indian Forest Policy of 1894 was adopted and implementation was continued by the Government of Pakistan after independence in 1947, until 1955. Subsequently, various forest policies were announced and adopted by the Government of Pakistan.

2.2 Customary regulations

Prior to British colonial rule, the forests of the NWFP were managed by locally developed indigenous institutions. Decision-taking regarding access to resources and distribution of benefits, management of resources, and responsibilities were deeply rooted in *rivaj* (customary law) and its enforcement mechanism, i.e. the *jirga* system – the council of tribal elders (Ahmad 2000; Sultan-i-Rome 2005). Details of this regulatory framework varied from region to region, however.

While the forests to the east of the Indus River (Hazara Division) came under direct colonial rule in 1849 and were soon declared Reserved Forests, the areas to the west of the Indus River retained a considerable measure of independence until 1969.⁴ In many areas, forests, according to *rivaj*, were owned by the owners of the agricultural lands concerned. The other segments of society (non-owners, landless people, etc.) had some forest use privileges; for example, they had free

access to forests within the boundaries of the village or tract concerned for grazing their livestock, cutting timber and collecting fuel wood for household purposes, cutting grass, lopping trees to feed cattle, and collecting minor forest products such as mushrooms, honey and medicinal plants (Sultan- i-Rome 2005). Today, such customary rules and regulations continue to structure local forest use and management, despite the enactment of state laws.

3. Participatory forest management

3.1 The inevitability of participatory forest management

Until recently, forest laws in Pakistan dated back to the 19th century and represented a narration of offences and corresponding punishment. However, these laws had not been able to protect and conserve mountain forests. The policing efforts of the DFFW seldom succeeded in protecting the forests; rather, they earned mistrust and provoked confrontation with local communities and defamation of the department staff (Iqbal 2000; Shahbaz et al. 2006). According to Khan and Naqvi (2000, page No. 19), “the top down, non-participatory approach drove a wedge between communities and their birthright by denying them a say in management and subjecting them to a legal process that was often arbitrary. The unprecedented levels of degradation the country is witnessing currently are partly rooted in this.” The conflict between customary regulations and the top-down state system made policy- makers – and specifically donors – realise the need for a change of paradigm towards more participatory procedures.

Initially in the NWFP, participatory forest management and extension programmes have been implemented at the regional project level on communal and state forest lands in Pakistan since the late 1980s.⁵ These donor-supported projects established village-level organisations for natural resource management, extension and infrastructure development activities. They were not in a position to halt pressure on forests, but they opened the doors for institutional change on a larger scale (Suleri 2002; Geiser and Steimann 2004).

This was reflected first in the National Forest Policy of 2001 and the NWFP Forest Policy of 2001; both emphasise the need for a participatory approach to forest management. However, these policies are under criticism from some civil society organisations that claim they are ‘donor-driven’ and thus ignore the realities and needs of the local population. In terms of institutionalising participatory approaches in these policies, the Forestry Sector Project (FSP) plays a crucial role, and it is therefore taken as a case study here below.

3.2 The Forestry Sector Project (FSP)

The FSP commenced in 1996 under a loan agreement between the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Pakistan,⁶ and has been working mainly on enhancing the DFFW's institutional capacity by following these principles and objectives (Heering 2002):

- Institutionalisation of the participatory forestry approach in the working of the department,
- Social organisation and capacity building of local community organisations,
- Increasing coordination and cooperation and promotion of team-based management in the department,
- Decentralisation of planning and authority,
- Re-definition and re-orientation of the role of the DFFW in advisory functions,
- Addressing gender concerns in the department,
- Improving the training and education system of the department.

Within the DFFW, a new structure was developed with the intention of decentralising planning and authority and increasing coordination and cooperation within the department.

As a principal tool for initiating participatory forest management at the local level, the FSP institutionalised land use planning at the village level – known as the Village Land Use Plan (VLUP) (Khattak 2002). The village plan accentuated the empowerment of residents in decision-making to improve natural resources. The VLUP involves a set of guided steps in a planning process with the intention of involving (in collaboration with the Forest Department) the local community, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and outside landowners in the protection and management of forests, in addition to undertaking development activities at the village level (Samyn and Nibbering 2002). As a platform for the VLUP and its subsequent implementation, Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Women's Organisations (WOs) were established. These committees and organisations were to be elected democratically, representing all the different social groups in a village. Thus they were expected to play a role beyond only forest-related issues. Improvement of the village infrastructure was also an objective of ADB-led participatory forestry in the NWFP, in addition to the core objective of forest management (ADB 1995). It is stated in VLUP procedures that if local people contribute 30% either in

cash or in kind, or in the form of labour for development schemes, then the project will contribute 70% (Government of NWFP 2001).

The FSP started the participatory system through the VLUP in a few selected pilot villages, and the reformed DFFW was expected to apply the concept in the whole province. The following section describes some experiences in pilot villages.

4. Confronting local social realities: An analysis of ‘decentralised’ forest management

The following analysis of the FSP’s participatory forest management is based on the realisation that many actors are involved in its operationalisation.⁷ Many of these actors have their own reasons for becoming involved (or not becoming involved) in a specific participation venture (Geiser 2001). Hence this section explores the characteristics, roles, extent of participation, and interactions by the main stakeholders in the FSP. Key stakeholders include the local people, their traditional forms of organisation, the Forest Department, timber dealers and, more recently, local governments, civil society and the donors.

4.1 The local people

The people living in and around the forests are important stakeholders and users of forest resources. The term ‘local people’ refers to heterogeneous social groups stratified according to income, caste, gender, religion and land ownership. Thus in the context of forestry, we find land owners, landless tenants, holders of rights to protected forests,⁸ non-right-holders, *gujjars* (nomads), etc. Their interaction with the FSP is discussed below while addressing some of the key issues that were identified in the course of our research.

Different expectations from the project: In general, local people use forests in a variety of ways (Figure 1).

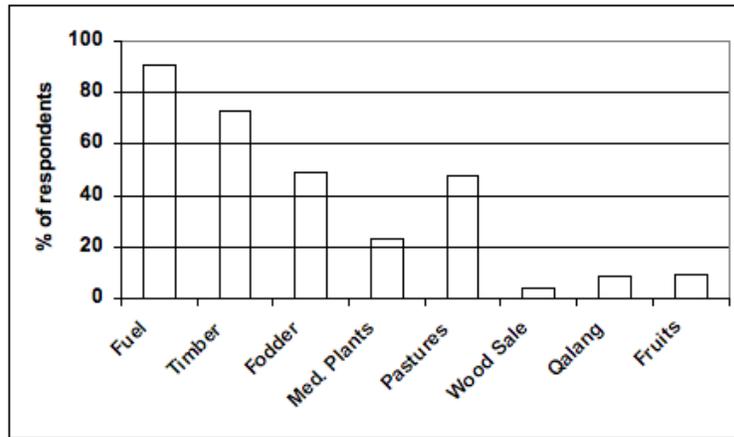


Fig. 1 Forest use patterns in the NWFP.⁹

Intensive use of forest resources such as gathering firewood and fuel wood, harvesting timber for the construction of new houses or repair of old houses, and use of forest pastures and fodder for livestock is mainly for subsistence purposes. Very few (local) people use forests for commercial purposes, such as collecting *qalang*¹⁰ and selling wood.¹¹ Thus, local people are not dependent on natural resources (forest and land) for cash income, as the main livelihood strategy is income received in the form of remittances (domestic and foreign),¹² followed by labour (daily wages), salaries and farming (Figure 2).

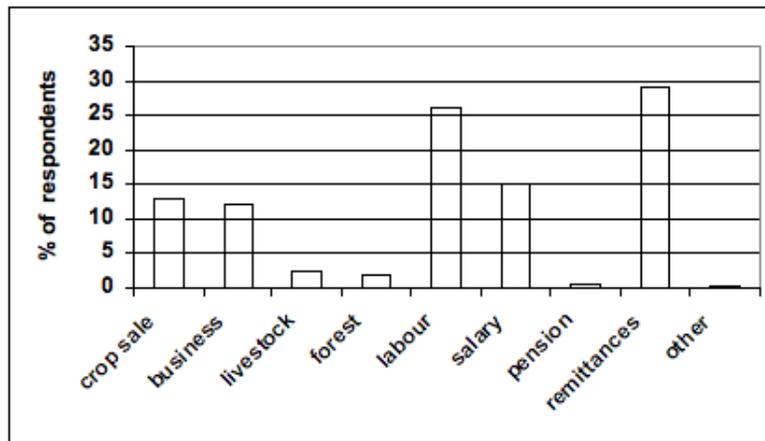


Fig. 2 Primary (main) sources of cash income.¹³

Small land holdings (see Figure 3) and low agricultural productivity in the mountainous areas of the NWFP are among the reasons for migration by the local communities.

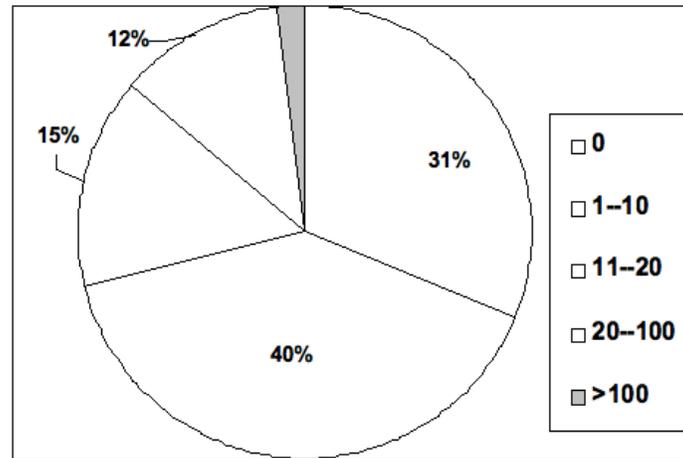


Fig. 3 Area of arable land.¹⁴

When asked about their priorities regarding livelihood outcomes, most people cited income or food security; very few people gave priority to better forest cover over income and food security (Shahbaz 2007).

Thus, we find a mismatch in expectations regarding the objectives and priorities of decentralised forest management. While the FSP emphasises forest protection and regeneration, these are not priorities for local people, whose main concerns include higher income, enhanced food security and improvement of village infrastructure (roads, provision of drinking water, and electricity) – issues that are actually also addressed by the FSP at least in principle, even if not in practice. Though improvement of forests would increase natural capital, the dearth of immediate incentives was a barrier in motivating local people to protect forests.

Regulating access: Construction timber is a precious commodity for local people because wood is the main component of their houses. Due to severe weather, houses need frequent repair and renovation but it is difficult for most people to gain access to timber. Usually the right-holders or *guzara* owners have to apply for a ‘timber permit’ for domestic needs. The permit procedure is quite complicated and a great deal of red tape is involved, including an application to be channelled through a hierarchy of forest officials– from forest guards to the Divisional Forest

Officer (DFO). The final decision is taken either by a range officer or the DFO, and then the application has to be routed back through the same channels. Field studies (Steimann 2004; Shahbaz 2007) revealed that in some of the project villages the permit procedure had been simplified, as the Forest Department had authorised the VDC to recommend the applications, which were then sent directly to the range officer. The respondents argued that if the local people had easier access to construction timber (as an outcome of participatory forest management), they would better protect/conservate their forests in collaboration with state forest officials.

Trust: The punitive laws and restrictions imposed by previous forest management strategies created a huge gap between local people and the state. The recent shift towards a participatory paradigm was expected to bridge this gap. However, research has shown that most of the people still perceive the DFFW as solely responsible for the depletion of forests. Moreover, the general perception of the people is that the Forest Department collaborates with the timber mafia¹⁵ and sells their precious forests to outsiders. On the other hand, the DFFW officials often blame local people for exploitative use of forest resources. However, the decentralised forest management model introduced by the FSP has the potential to bridge this gap, as a slight improvement in the quality of relationships and the level of trust was recorded in the project villages¹⁶ as compared to other (non- project) villages (Shahbaz 2007). During the VLUP process, the DFFW staff frequently visited the villages concerned and the villagers had more opportunities to meet the foresters and even higher officials in their areas. Although residents of the project villages showed some resentment towards the DFFW, the situation was worse in the non- project villages.

Involvement of marginal groups: Research has shown that poor and marginalised people were ignored in the VLUP process and the activities of the VDCs/WOs. The DFFW selected villages for FSP interventions and VLUP processes that were comparatively accessible by road, while far-flung and remote villages were not considered. Similarly, within the project villages, the residents of remote hamlets in one of these villages participated less in the activities of the VDC than people living in the central hamlets of that village.

4.2 Civil society

In this paper, the term ‘civil society’ refers to organised institutions in the context of the rural mountainous area of the NWFP – excluding family, government and business – aiming at societal change. We found organisations that are of a customary (e.g. the *jirga*) or religious nature, as well as more recent institutions such

as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and project-induced community-based organisations (CBOs).

Community-based organisations (CBOs): The FSP has created new village-level institutions in the selected project villages. During the preparation of the VLUP, the villagers were urged to constitute Village Development Committees (VDCs) composed of 12–15 males, and Women’s Organisations (WOs) consisting of 10–12 females. The male social organiser in the Forest Department assisted in the establishment of the VDCs, while the female social organiser (usually a female forestry extensionist) helped in the formation of the WO. The residents of various hamlets in a village selected their respective members, and in turn these members elected (or selected) the president, secretary, treasurer, etc. of their VDC and WO. These new institutions are to implement the VLUP, to make the community aware of the importance and proper management of their natural resources, to “bring the community towards a collective and self-help vision for their general development”, and to “bring harmony and decrease social disparity by giving equal opportunity to everyone through human resource development”.¹⁷

In principle, these institutions represent new social capital for many households. Our studies (Awais 2005; Shahbaz and Ali 2006) revealed, though, that, by and large, the common villagers did not participate in the meetings and activities of the VDCs and that usually only elected members of these institutions participated in the monthly committee meetings. Many were unhappy with the performance of the VDC, because ambitious commitments, such as improvement of physical infrastructure, income generation and ease of access to timber, had been made by FSP representatives during the VLUP process and initial meetings of the VDCs. But with the passage of time, the villagers became frustrated and disappointed due to the very low pace of the VDC developmental activities, and the non-cooperative behaviour of the DFFW staff. In some areas where the VDC had undertaken plantations by employing local labourers, the Forest Department had not paid their wages for many months.

Women are the main stakeholders and users of forests in the subsistence domain. They collect water, fuel wood and fodder, raise small livestock as well as processing food, cooking and caring for children; however, their participation in the planning process of the VLUP was negligible. Women’s organisations (WOs) exist in most of the project villages, but only on paper, with practically no activity being undertaken. The main cause for this is male dominance and the influence of religious groups in the rural areas of the NWFP. Another factor in the disappointing performance of the WO is the lack of capacity and leadership among the fe-

male population in rural areas of NWFP. Female literacy in the rural NWFP is only 21.7% as compared to 59.2% for the males.¹⁸

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and ‘social movements’: Several NGOs are working in the forest-rich districts of the NWFP,¹⁹ the most prominent among which is the Sungi Development Foundation, established in 1989 as a non-profit and non-governmental public interest organisation. It resulted from an initiative taken by a group of socially and politically active individuals from the mountainous regions of NWFP (mainly Hazara Division). Sungi has remained critical of state institutions, particularly the DFFW. It also helped in the establishment of the Sarhad Awami Forestry Ittehad (SAFI, People’s Alliance on Forestry in the NWFP) in 1997, an alliance of various forest stakeholders who are challenging the state forest reform process. The common aim is to protect the forest and people’s forest rights. SAFI argues that these rights are not properly observed in the FSP-led initiative concerned with participatory forest management (SAFI 2000).

SAFI is one of the very few examples in the NWFP where people have organised to engage in the policy debate for their rights in resource management. It has an established membership (currently 3,000) and staff, a constitution, a formal charter of demands and a forest protection manifesto. The mission of SAFI is:

“to motivate stakeholders, especially deprived and ignored sections (women, tenants); to bring changes in the policy, laws and forest related institutions, which are based on the environmental principles for a wise, sustainable, and participatory management of forests; and to promote social justice for all segments of the local population by demarcating and protecting their needs and rights in relation to forests on a mutual basis.” (SAFI 2000, page 2)

However, according to Khan et al. (2006, page-24) “SAFI is not yet a fully evolved people’s movement and continues to draw extensively upon Sungi’s support”. Nevertheless, with no means of financial self-reliance and in a relatively short time, it has developed a distinctive pulse. For example, it established forest protection societies and community checkpoints to prevent illegal timber movements. SAFI organised an intensive campaign against the promulgation of NWFP Forest Ordinance 2002, which provided legal cover to institutional change, at different levels (province, districts and *tehsils*). It also translated the new Forest Ordinance into the Urdu language.

However, the protests made little headway, as the DFFW claimed sacrosanct status for the ordinance under the Legal Framework Order (LFO)²⁰ of the

military government (Khan et al. 2006). Initially, the FSP process provided considerable space for the involvement of NGOs in planning, implementing and monitoring the process. Some NGOs (Sungi, Sustainable Development Policy Institute [SDPI]) were invited during the planning stage of the FSP. But the involvement of NGOs was reduced once the project had been started and the DFFW received funding from donors. Thus, most civil society organisations are quite critical of the approach adopted by the DFFW, and accuse the Forest Department of not being willing to decentralise forest resources in the true letter and spirit of the law. Many local people, though, have mixed perceptions of these NGOs. Many (especially religious groups) believe that these NGOs have some hidden (Western) agenda and want to spread Western culture in the area.

Jirga – the assembly of elders: *Jirga* means council, assembly or meeting in the Pushto language. A *jirga* is normally composed of elderly males most of whom belong to the dominant tribes of a village. The youth, women, minorities and (sometimes) less powerful or small tribes in the village have no representation in the *jirga*. The main role of the *jirga* is that of conflict resolution, but it is also important in reproducing and continuing traditional regulations governing access to forests according to *rivaj*.

Analysis of the data collected (Shahbaz 2007) regarding the collective action undertaken by local people in development, such as construction/repair of roads, water supply schemes and plantations, revealed that significantly more people in the project villages contributed to such activities than in the non-project villages. Those respondents (or their family members) who contributed to such activities were asked as to who motivated them. In the project villages, the VDC provided the main stimulus for motivating people to undertake such collective actions, whereas in the non-project villages, the *jirga* and the mosque were the major motivational forces.

From this discussion it can be concluded that the new (democratic) institutions (VDCs) created as an outcome of the participatory approach to development have the potential to replace traditional (orthodox) institutions such as *jirga* and mosques in some cases.²¹

Religious groups and movements: A majority of the rural population of Pakistan in general, and of the NWFP in particular, is Muslim and religion has deep roots in the culture and traditions of society. The religious leaders, who belong to different schools of thought (or sections of Islam), are widely respected by their respective followers. Most of these people are trained and educated in the confined atmosphere of a *Madrassah* (religious school). Religious leaders such as the *Imam Masjid* (the

one who leads prayers in a mosque), the *Pir* (the spiritual leader) and the *Tablighee* (one belonging to a particular preaching sect/group of Islam) act as initiators of religious and related social change movements. The *Imam Masjid* motivates people (particularly in Friday prayers) to engage in activities and tasks for the betterment (according to their own vision) of society in traditional ways. They rarely rely on innovative and strategic measures to change society.²²

In implementing participatory forest management, although the mosque was used (in some study villages) by the FSP for announcements regarding meetings of the VDCs, involvement of the *Imam Masjid* in the activities of the VDCs, awareness-raising campaigns, tree plantation activities, etc. were not considered.²³ Besides being a potential entry point for forest-related matters, religious practices are one of the obstacles to gender mainstreaming and thus add to the ineffectiveness of WOs. According to Sattar and Baig (2001, page 15),

“throughout 2000, NGOs were subjected to repeated verbal assaults by religious leaders. The attacks came despite the support extended by the government ministers to NGOs calling for their inclusion in advisory panels and in undertaking work at the grassroots level. Religious extremists continue to accuse development and advocacy-oriented NGOs of working against ‘national ideology’ by spreading liberal and secular values.”

4.3 Local governments

In October 1999, the politically elected government of Pakistan was overthrown by the army and General Parvaiz Musharraf took power. The military government instantaneously announced a Seven Point Agenda to deal with the so-called institutional crisis in the country. One of the main components of this agenda was the introduction of the Devolution of Power Plan in 2000. The new system provides a three-tier local government structure within each province: District, *Tehsil* and Union Council. Each is comprised of a *nazim* (mayor) and *naib nazim* (or deputy), an elected body and administrative structures. The elections at the Union Council (UC) level constitute the backbone of the entire system. It is the only level where elections are direct and citizens elect their representatives by vote, while the district and *tehsil* assemblies consist of *nazims* and *naib nazims* of the UC respectively.

The most prominent point of departure from previous local government schemes in Pakistan was this plan’s proposal to place the elected *Nazim* (Mayor) at the top of the district administration. Previously, control had been with the provincial state through the post of the Deputy Commissioner (DC); this was now abolished and the provincial bureaucracy represented through a District Coordination Officer (DCO) – a civil servant who now works under the direction of the elected *Nazim*. The DCO heads the district administration and is supported by Executive

District Officers (EDOs) working in different provincial departments such as agriculture, education, finance, planning, health, information technology, law, literacy and revenue.

However, the forestry sector was among the few sectors not included in the devolution plan. The provincial Forest Department remained the main ‘custodian’ of the forests; only the farm forestry component was devolved and handed over to the district administration. Therefore, regarding natural forests, there is no formal link between the local governments and the DFFW. Nor do the VDCs and WOs have any formal interaction with the local governments. This reality does not foster coordination and trust. The representatives of local governments (e.g. councillors) are very critical of the DFFW and blamed it for working against the interests of the communities.

On the other hand, as a DFO remarked:

“The local governments and the ministers are pressurising us regarding timber permits, transfer of staff, etc. They are least interested in forestry matters. The permits [for timber] were issued by the DFO but now the DFO issues the permits with the recommendation of the *Nazim*. But in each and every case the *Nazims* recommend the permit; they never deny anybody. They have to do this for political reasons; they have to please their voters and contest the election again.”

Another DFO stated that “forestry is the least priority for the local governments; they don’t even bother to reply to our letters”.

4.4 Timber merchants

Very high timber prices in Pakistan (10,000 to 12,500 Rupees (130 – 160 USD) per pine tree; Khan et al. 2007) make the timber business a lucrative one, and thus illegal timber harvesting has become widespread throughout the highlands of the NWFP. Commercial timber harvesting in the NWFP has been banned since 1992, but illegal harvesting has continued at an even higher pace. During the same period (around 1995), the notion of a ‘timber mafia’ became common in northern Pakistan. This refers to a network of various actors (political leaders, some state forest officials, influential locals and outsiders, businessmen, transporters, police, etc.) established with the single purpose of making money from cutting and selling timber illegally. This nexus emerged through certain practices such as networking, bribing, blackmailing, buying royalties, as well as exporting local timber and importing ‘foreignised’ timber (Geiser 2000).

The DFFW is blamed by civil society, local people and journalists for being involved in illegal timber cutting and facilitating the timber mafia. Some politicians and even members of the national and provincial assemblies are also believed to be

supporters of or even part of the timber mafia (Shahbaz 2007). This makes it quite difficult for honest foresters to catch the real offenders. In a field interview, a forest officer stated that he once stopped a truck fully loaded with wood logs and handed over the offenders to the police, but the very next day when he was standing on the roadside a car struck him and his leg was broken as a result. According to him, the car belonged to timber smugglers taking revenge. Another DFO stated that “when-ever we catch a big criminal, my telephone and personal mobile phone start ringing with calls from influential persons who want the release of the offenders”. According to the local people, most of the forest officials receive bribes from the timber smugglers and allow them to cut precious trees.

Interestingly, in the context of participatory forest management in the selected pilot projects, a significant reduction of illicit tree cutting as compared to the non-project villages was recorded, which indicates that strengthening the sense of ownership and responsibility at the local level might be of use.

4.5 The Forest Department

The FSP has worked mainly on enhancement of the Forest Department’s institutional capacity and has effected some changes in its administrative structure, with the intention of decentralising planning and authority (i.e. to backstop the VDCs and WOs), and to increase coordination and cooperation within the department. In practice, however, many lower-level staff of the DFFW have not accepted the new (participatory) approach and feel that their authority and ‘source of income’ are threatened. According to a Divisional Forest Officer (DFO),

“the Forest Department has taken the lead among all other departments to involve/empower the communities in the management of forest resources. But a quick change in attitude in people [lower-level foresters] who have been working in the department for a long time is very difficult and it is not easy for them to adjust in the new setup. However, we are learning slowly and moving towards the joint forest management system (...)”.

5. Discussion

The results of research presented in this paper refer to efforts by state authorities in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) to decentralise the planning and implementation of forest management. It has been argued that decentralisation is unavoidable, considering past experiences with the top-down, colonially based procedures. We have also pointed out that the efforts made by the FSP show interesting initial outcomes, such as a reduction of illegal timber harvesting in project villages. However, the insights gained show that the actual practice of designing and imple-

menting such decentralised resource management is a contested field in itself, an arena that determines whether such intentions are successful or whether they fail. Our research underlines the importance – in the context of Pakistan – of several issues. Among these are:

- a donor-driven process,
- the importance of (divergent) expectations in the process,
- ignoring customary forest management procedures,
- timber market incentives for non-participation,
- the limited devolution of power,
- the historically rooted mistrust between the state and local people,
- overlapping and non-coordinated institutions,
- the difficulties of non-state actors in such a sensitive context.

Donor-driven process: The participatory approach to forest management was initiated through donor-assisted projects, specifically the FSP, which was launched in 1996. The donors also pushed heavily for the formulation of the Forest Policy of 2001. A mechanism intended to ‘broad-base’ the institutionalisation of participatory forest management failed. This meant that no reforms came from local collective action. One reason for this is said to be prevailing power relations: the actors with the most bargaining power profited greatly from the local open access constellation regarding forests (as a consequence of competing state and customary regulations); hence there was no need for them to change the institutional setting. But as participation has become mainstream in the global development arena, forestry projects were donor-funded only when village-level committees were established. This raises questions about the ownership of the reform process.

Divergent expectations: The stated objectives indicate that the mandates of the VDCs and the WOs went beyond forest-related activities, but in practice the DFFW emphasised forest protection activities, ignoring the developmental component of the project. The DFFW has a mandate to manage forests specifically for supplying timber to the nation, and to secure the forests’ ecological functions. In decentralising forest management, the department maintains these priorities. On the other hand, local people use forests in a variety of ways, among which meeting subsistence needs (e.g. firewood, soil, timber for house construction) has priority. Financial livelihood concerns are not met by forests (e.g. by selling timber), but by selling labour in the context of migration. Local people’s top priorities are to secure the financial means required for a living and related basic needs such as physical infrastructure, schooling and health. Thus, their expectations of VDCs lie in these

areas. Our results show that this divergence of expectations is addressed by the FSP in theory but not in practice.

Ignoring customary forest management procedures: Our research shows that state- initiated decentralisation of forest management, on the one hand, does not consider traditional practices (*rivaj*) of forest use but maintains the state's authority, and on the other hand is unable to overcome traditional access discrimination among local people.

This paper highlights, for example, that the VDCs are controlled by influential people and that poor people are given less representation and thus fewer opportunities for participation in these committees.

Timber market incentives for non-participation: Timber is a highly priced good locally, and the most powerful actors in the state as well as in the communities are not interested in changing informal institutions based on weak formal institutions, because they would be on the losing side. For actors with less bargaining power, participatory approaches might be of interest if developed together with them. Otherwise, it is of no use for them to be engaged if they have nothing to gain and only very limited power to redress the institutional setting. Participatory forest management can be an effective strategy to deal with the timber mafia by developing a sense of awareness and ownership among forest residents. Participation in decision-making (e.g. the VLUP process) has created a sense of ownership among local communities (witnessed, for example, in the reduction of illegal cutting by villagers and their protection of forests from outsiders in the project villages, as well as new plantations). But there is another weakness in the new institutions. The responsibility (as delegated by the state) of these newly created institutions concerns protection of the forests rather than management, meaning again that no sense of local ownership can evolve. There are very few incentives for the committees regarding forest protection, while a change in the status quo would mean that the most powerful actors would cease to profit from timber. As a result, the members of the committees as well as other actors are losing interest. The village committees are tightly controlled by the Forest Department, too, and therefore not able to act independently. Under these conditions neither trust and friendly relationships nor good governance can be expected.

Limited devolution of power: One of the main problems with the decentralised forest management system in the NWFP is that the state still holds the key decision-making powers. Decentralisation is not about the downsizing or dismantling of central government; rather, it calls for mutually supportive democratic central and

local governance (Ribot 2002). Despite continued emphasis on devolving forest management authorities to local communities, in practice genuine devolution of authority and power over forests has occurred only to a limited extent. However, strong political will is needed for effective decentralised forest management; otherwise, state control over resources will just be reinforced.

Lack of trust: The historical background of the colonial and postcolonial state, with its ineffective top-down policies, has led local actors to conclude that existing institutional structures will not be changed easily. Mistrust and insecurity have therefore given way to a kind of prisoner's dilemma in which each side behaves as if there were no participatory approaches. Neither state actors nor local government or local-level actors are willing to cooperate. The consequences are high deforestation rates and institutional instability, which make it difficult to establish robust institutions.

Underlying the above-mentioned divergence of interests is a historically rooted mistrust between local people and the state on the one hand and the unwillingness of actors with great bargaining power, such as officers from the Forest Department, to devolve power on the other hand. For such officials, devolution of power would mean more insecurity and vulnerability, while local governments, villagers and households do not really have a say in the matter. Therefore the new institutions and organisations created for the participatory forest management process are not stable, nor is the department really willing to fulfil this demand for devolution of power. On the other hand, local people experience every day that the forestry staff is not trustworthy.

The (limited) role of civil society and 'social movements': Various non-state, non-business groups are trying to operate within this contested political space. They include more modern types of NGOs (implementing donor-funded local development schemes), the traditionally powerful *jirga*, and groups working to foster traditional values (e.g. religious organisations). This paper specifically discusses the intentions and activities of a movement (SAFI) that challenges the state's approach to decentralising forest management. It shows that, on the one hand, the FSP does not really engage in a dialogue with these social entities, and that, on the other hand, these entities themselves are not in a position to effect a change in local resource use.

Overlapping organisations and lack of coordination: A general lack of integration in efforts and coordination among various NGOs working in the forest areas of the NWFP was found during the field surveys. During field studies, two or three,

sometimes even more CBOs formed by the FSP, Sungi, Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), etc. were found working in the same village without any formal interaction and collaboration. Similarly, there was no formal coordination of these CBOs (particularly the VDCs and the WOs) with the local governments (UC) in the context of forest-related and other developmental activities.²⁴

There is potential, though: The links between UCs and VDC/sWOs exist only informally, i.e. in cases where a member of the UC is also a member of the VDC or the WO. In such cases, the efficiency of these institutions was higher than in cases where members of the UC are not also members of the VDC or the WO. Similarly, a higher level of trust and stronger relationships in the UC were recorded in project villages where the members of the UC were also 'active' members of the VDC. This is due to the fact that the villagers then had more chances for interaction with their councillors (members of the UC), and the developmental activities carried out by the VDC were supported by the councillors. As a result, relationships and trust between the local community and the UC were better than between state institution (DFFW).

6. Conclusions

A participatory approach to forest management must first analyse the power and interests of involved stakeholders before actual implementation. The difficulty is that one has to deal with both formal legal instruments and informal rules (customary practices, etc.), where unequal power relations and social conflicts are quite common. Confidence can only be built up between state actors and local people/governments if real devolution of power takes place. This means that local, clearly defined institutions are given the right to manage forests in locally defined by-laws. There must be proof that state actors help local stakeholders to enforce these regulations against the timber mafia, because in view of the influence of powerful traders and outsiders, this cannot always be done by local people alone, not even within communities, as there is an asymmetry of power. However, this would in turn necessitate that forest officials are properly paid for carrying out such difficult jobs, so that they would earn more money from doing their job than they might get from the timber mafia. In the same way, the gains for local communities, partly directly at the household level, have to be tangible in order to provide an incentive to protect the forest.

Therefore, halting the degradation of forests and improving livelihoods in these areas not only requires more decentralisation and participation on paper but also in reality, with benefits being more than the losses and mechanisms being established to punish freeloaders on all sides. Trust between state authorities and local

actors can only be built if local institutions are accorded full empowerment in the context of a participatory forest management system; building trust must also take into account the contextual considerations of local stakeholders.

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¹ The paper was first published in Geiser U, Rist S, editors. 2009. *Decentralisation Meets Local Complexity: Local Struggles, State Decentralisation and Access to Natural Resources in South Asia and Latin America*. Perspectives of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South, University of Bern, Vol. 4. Bern: Geographica Bernensia, 310 pp. Available at <http://www.north-south.unibe.ch/content.php/publication/id/2390>

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³ Professor of Agricultural Extension, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan. His research interests include rural development policies, decentralisation and gender issues.

⁴ In 1969, these princely states were merged with Pakistan, and around 1973, forests were declared to be protected.

⁵ Eight extension projects implemented various models of participatory forest management in upland areas of Pakistan: the Malakand/Dir Social Forestry Project (MDSFP), the Kalam Integrated Development Project (KIDP), the Siran Forest Development Project (SFDP), the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in the Northern Areas, the Suketar Watershed Management Project, the Himalayan

Wildlife Project, the Himalayan Jungle Project and the Khunjerab Village Organisation.

⁶ The government of the Netherlands, the German GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) also contributed to the project.

⁷ The empirical context of this analysis is based on a literature review and specifically on findings from research done by Shahbaz (2007) for a PhD degree and from the M.Sc. thesis by Awais (2005).

⁸ The right-holders as recognised by forest laws are those entitled to share in timber revenues.

⁹ Source: data collected by Shahbaz (2007), derived from 400 randomly selected households in Mansehra and Swat districts of the NWFP.

¹⁰ The fee that right-holders receive from the *gujars* (nomads) for grazing their cattle is called *qalang*.

¹¹ The general assumption that most forest resources are destroyed by local residents can thus not be supported. In fact, local people do not cut trees for economic reasons; however, they have to use a minor part of the forest resources for their survival/subsistence. This includes fuel wood, timber (for household use), pastures and fodder. Intensive use of wood as fuel for cooking and heating houses during harsh winters was essentially due to the non-availability of alternate sources of energy (Ali et al. 2006). Natural gas is not available in the mountain villages of the NWFP and the higher cost of electricity is a constraint on using it for cooking and heating. Similarly, local people cannot afford kerosene oil and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders. The winter season is very harsh, with heavy snowfall, and people have no other option except to use forest wood for cooking and heating.

¹² In most cases the adult male family members had migrated to big cities in Pakistan (mainly Karachi) or to foreign countries (mostly Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states) to earn a living; most of these migrants have low-paying jobs such as bus conductors/drivers, labourers, etc.

¹³ Source: data collected by Shahbaz (2007), derived from 400 randomly selected households in Mansehra and Swat districts of the NWFP.

¹⁴ Source: data collected by Shahbaz (2007), derived from 400 randomly selected households in Mansehra and Swat districts of the NWFP.

¹⁵ This refers to a network of people established with the single purpose of making money from cutting and selling timber illegally. This nexus emerged through the use of certain practices such as networking, bribing, blackmailing, buying royalties, as well as exporting local timber and importing 'foreignised' timber (Geiser 2000).

¹⁶ The villages where the Forestry Sector Project (FSP) intervened and the decentralised (or participatory) forest management system was implemented.

¹⁷ Source: Govt. of NWFP 2001.

¹⁸ Insignificant efforts have been made so far regarding women's rights and gender mainstreaming in the province. In the context of the FSP, there is a lack of female social organisers. Even in some areas where the Department of Forests, Wildlife and Fisheries (DFFW) had acquired the services of female social organisers or female forestry extensionists, these members rarely visited remote mountainous villages.

¹⁹ There are also some district-level non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (e.g. Hujrah in Swat district and Haasshar in Mansehra district) working for capacity building and community organisation regarding natural resource management in the upland areas of the NWFP with the support of international donor agencies.

²⁰ On 24 August 2002, General Musharraf issued the Legal Framework Order, announcing general elections to be held in October 2002. Various constitutional provisions were amended through this ordinance.

²¹ This confirms Steimann's hypothesis (2004) that community-based organisations are gradually replacing the practical use of *jirga*.

²² Similarly *Tablighees* (preachers) go from home to home, knock on doors and invite people to listen to them. They use both punishment and reward techniques, including the fear of hell and punishment after death and the incentives of going to heaven and reaping otherworldly rewards. They motivate people to join them in their task of inviting other people to obey God by doing good deeds and avoiding bad deeds. Their approach is mainly religious and does not cover overall societal development. The *Pirs* (spiritual leaders) belong to the sufi school of thought in Islam and address the spiritual problems of the people. Their followers include mainly poor, illiterate and orthodox people. These followers obey the orders of the *Pirs* in order to please them.

²³ Despite the facts that the religious groups have deep roots in the socio-cultural setting of the rural NWFP and that the then provincial government was also composed of an alliance of various religious parties and groups, there was not much deliberation regarding the involvement of such groups in institutional reform processes.

²⁴ According to the devolution plan, the local governments have modest influence on forestry-related activities.

The Rhetoric of Democracy and War on Terror: The Case of Pakistan

By Masood Ashraf Raja

On November 3, 2007 General Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan declared a state of emergency. What ensued in the preceding weeks on the national front was a total blockade of free speech, a complete reshuffling of Pakistani Supreme Court, and an absolute clamp down on all political activities. His address to the nation started with the following instructive rationale:

As I speak to you today, Pakistan is facing a very dangerous situation. It is suffering from an internal crisis and whatever is happening now is related to the internal disturbance. During such moments for nations, a time comes when difficult decisions have to be taken. And if we do not take timely action, then God forbid it could be dangerous to Pakistan's sovereignty.

In the same speech Mr. Musharraf named terrorism, rising extremism, paralysis of the government system caused by the Supreme Court interventions, and negative media coverage as possible threats to the Pakistani sovereignty. He further went on to state that the law and order situation had deteriorated so drastically that the "extremists are roaming freely without let or hindrance in the country, and are not afraid of law enforcing agencies." In any other circumstances, this break down of law and order could clearly been the responsibility of the ruling government, for the failure of law and order was also the failure of the government, especially a government with absolute powers of a military dictator. But surprisingly enough, while admitting that the country was in turmoil, Mr. Musharraf failed to take any blame for it himself but attempted to apportion blame to the terrorists themselves and the judiciary and the free media, as if simply by performing their task of reporting and dispensing justice these the judiciary and the media had become the sole cause of the destabilization of Pakistan. Needless to say, in the very same speech—according to which Pakistan had reached a disastrous situation—Mr. Musharraf represented himself as the only true hope for Pakistan. Nowhere in his speech was there a reference to the failure of his own policies and the ramifications of his deep embrace with the United States in the "War against Terror" that might have brought Pakistan to the state of emergency. Let us remind ourselves that until September

11 2001, Mr. Musharraf was a completely isolated dictator who had seized power from an elected government and then cobbled together a government of political turncoats drawn from all segments of Pakistan's political spectrum.

His base, if that it may be called, was the military and the Muttahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM) in Karachi, an organization that the Pakistan army (until recently) considered a terrorist group notorious in the mid-eighties for murder, rape, and extortion in Karachi and Hyderabad, the two major southern cities of Pakistan. Surprisingly, while the general detailed the rise of fanaticism and troubles for Pakistan as a basis for declaring emergency, he did not even hazard an opinion as to why suddenly Pakistan had become such a dangerous place. It seemed as if this internal threat to Pakistan rose outside of history and could not find any explicatory narrative within the ten years of the general's own rule and the general's attempts at seeking much needed national and international legitimation.

In my opinion, most of the current problems of Pakistan stem from the very nature of Pakistan's involvement in the "War on Terror" mandate that the general accepted in order to legitimate his government in the eyes of the west in general and the United States in particular. September eleven suddenly made the general into the most sought after ally in the region due to immediate US interest in Afghanistan. It was his decision to support the US war effort uncritically in Afghanistan that set Pakistan for the current situation, for while the "War on Terror" policies are safe for the US, as most of these wars are not being fought on the US territories, an uncritical acquiescence to the US mandate was bound to create a tension within Pakistan. The situation was further complicated by the history of pre-September eleven engagement between the Pakistani government and the Taliban. General Pervez Musharraf, especially, was deeply connected to the Taliban mujahideen who he used as a proxy in his misadventure into the Kargil offensive in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, a military adventure, carried out without the approval of elected Pakistani government, that almost led India and Pakistan to an all out war in 1998. Certainly, then, when the general did an about turn to accommodate the US against the Taliban, for the Taliban, who had died fighting in the general's war, this about turn was not just political but also deeply personal. But buying into the US tactics of "War on Terror" has even further aggravated the situation.

Generally speaking the Afghan situation and the allied offensive against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda followed a certain tactical pattern: the US ground forces basically acted as, for lack of a better word, "strike calling groups" that moved into the Taliban territory and then tried to eliminate Taliban positions by carefully directing air strikes at the likely targets. From the US point of view these tactics made sense, for it reduced the chances of US casualties while ensuring maximum punishment for the likely targets from a safe distance. No doubt that in this process

of lethal air strikes, the US forces could, and did, term any civilian deaths, if the question ever arose, as necessary collateral damage. But emulating the same strike and kill strategy within the borders of Pakistan by its own national army takes a completely different shape in the popular Pakistani perception.

For the people of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), these incursions into the tribal territories are seen as an extension of US policy into the tribal heartlands by the Pakistan army. Thus, by extension, the Pakistani government and the Pakistan army in the tribal consciousness become conflated with the so-called infidel western powers. While the Taliban may not be able to launch any direct attacks against the mainland United States, they, in order to legitimate themselves as a resistance group, go for the easily available targets in the region, Pakistan itself. Hence, Pakistan in the popular imagination of the tribes and their Taliban counterparts is no longer a Muslim country that they may not have otherwise attacked but part of a global infidel conspiracy against their version of the shari'ah and Islam. The increasing Taliban attacks inside Pakistan are a direct result of the "War on Terror" that the Pakistan government waged during Musharraf years, often against its national interest and often for legitimating Mr. Musharraf's unconstitutional rule in the eyes of the western and the US policy makers. The US certainly is the main exponent of current neoliberal regime of economics. Under this economic model, the government cannot legitimate itself through its social welfare functions as most of those functions have been privatized. The chief mode of legitimation for the US then becomes the security of its citizens. Under this operative regime, the "War on Terror" serves as a constant tool of legitimation for the US government while the citizens are left to cope with the market forces at their own. Since the war itself is being fought elsewhere on other territories the immediate effects of the war do not concern average US citizens. However, the modes of legitimation in the other parts of the world, especially Pakistan, are still linked with the good works performed by the government. In a sense people still expect their government to run a welfare state in the traditional sense of the term. In fact in the words of one Pakistani journalist:

This [the neoliberal economic model] brings us to the role and responsibility of the state: should it outsource most of its functions and let citizens sink or swim? Or should it play an active role in ensuring that nobody should go hungry; that all children are enrolled in schools where they receive a decent education, whether they can pay or not; and that everybody has access to adequate health care.

Mr. Musharraf, however, having quickly moved into the neo-liberal economic policies, was also attempting to use public security as mode of legitimation, a fact painfully clear in his speech. But to most of the people of Pakistan this perpetual

war is inextricably linked with the US interest in the region and hence the idea of a security state no longer works as a legitimating strategy for Mr. Musharraf.

Also, most Al-Qaeda and Taliban supported groups in Pakistan are from the extreme Wahabi factions. Their actions are underwritten by a strict interpretation of the rules of Shariah and the concept of *Takfeer*, or the state of infidelness. *Takfeer* was first juridically discussed by Imam Ibn Taymiyyah. Accordingly, after Ibn Taymiyyah, it became possible to rationalize one Muslim power's war against the other Muslims if the condition of *Takfeer*—Muslims living in a state of infidelness—could be proved. By far Ibn Saud—the founder of Saudi dynasty—and his religious guide Muhammad ibn Abdulwahab, used this concept most effectively, and arbitrarily, to fight the other Muslim groups of the Arabian peninsula until the Saud family was completely in control of the Najd and later what they named as Saudi Arabia. The Taliban and their Al-Qaeda allies follow the same strict Wahabi interpretation of the Shariah. For them, to declare a Pakistani leader and institution in the state of *Takfeer* requires only, at this time, to be connected directly to US interests, especially the US “War on Terror” and its ensuing operations in Afghanistan. Hence, as long as Mr. Pervez Musharraf continued his policy of fighting the US proxy war on his own soil, the number of Taliban and Al-Qaeda volunteers continued to grow. A sad example of this escalation can be clearly traced to the tragic assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto wasn't killed because she was a woman; she was killed because she was seen as an extension of US interest in the region. Her case wasn't really helped when the US press represented her as a strong US ally and suggested that she had gone back to Pakistan under a deal brokered by the United States. Certainly, something must have changed in Pakistan that she returned to during her earlier two terms as Prime Minister, there were no known attempts by her opponents to assassinate her. What has changed drastically in Pakistan is its political climate, where the wars being fought in the NWFP and Baluchistan have now started spilling into the main urban areas of Pakistan. Sadly, Benazir Bhutto was a casualty of this particular escalation and her death warrant was written long before she stepped foot on the Pakistani soil. The main tragedy of her death is that at the very moment when she had decided to become a true leader by openly defying the Washington mandate to support Mr. Musharraf, she was killed. In this whole scenario the most important thing to remember is not as to which particular leader is pro or con US, but rather how does a particular leader maintain the illusion of Pakistani sovereignty. In the era of global capitalism this national sovereignty is nothing but an illusion, but such illusions serve an important function of legitimizing the national governments of particular nation-states. Every time the Pakistani leadership emulates the US tactics of “War on Terror”, the illusion is erased and the

people come to see their leaders as puppets of their US and European masters. In case of Mr. Musharraf this public perception of him had become almost axiomatic.

On the whole the newly imposed emergency wasn't much different from the arbitrary system of power that the general had employed until then, but it finally lifted the veil of carefully crated hegemonic power structure and brought the brute force of general's dictatorship clearly to his national and international audience, especially his US allies. This time was also extremely crucial for the future of US perception in Pakistan. The Pakistanis have never really believed the often loud declarations in favor of democracy that are issued from various media and political pulpits of the US, but the declaration of emergency became the absolute testing moment of the US commitment to democracy. It would be apt to suggest that in those few days the constant US rhetoric about the importance of democracy suddenly found itself under the limelight and was displayed in its nakedness as nothing but rhetoric. The US response was quite instructive, for it made it clear once and for all for the people of Pakistan that when it came time for the US to choose between an alliance with a military dictator and the possibility of a democratic Pakistan, the US chose the convenience of backing their favorite dictator, and this is the image of the United States that has now been reported, represented, and perceived by the Pakistani public. As a result any legitimate government, automatically, will have to put some distance between itself and the US war agenda in the region, which seems to be the only sane approach to stabilizing Pakistan and making it safe in the long run.

Notes:

¹ The text of the speech is available at <http://www.presidentofpakistan.gov.pk/PresidentialSpeeches.aspx>. Visited on January 9, 2008.

² In 1986 MQM was considered a terrorist organization. The author was in Karachi during that year and as an army officer was part of the regular curfew deployments to check the sectarian clashes between the Muhajirs and non-Muhajirs in the city. During that time the MQM was officially considered a terrorist organization.

³ I am not suggesting here that Pakistan should not fight actively against the threat of terrorism, but my point is that Pakistan's contribution to the War on Terror needs to be guided by Pakistan's own immediate national interest and should in no way be solely driven by the US national interest.

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⁴ For a good discussion of neoliberal economics see John Rapley, *Globalization and Inequality*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

⁵ Zygmunt Bauman provides a brilliant discussion of this particular aspect of neoliberal's reliance on security as legitimating tool for the state. For details see his *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (New York: Polity, 2004).

⁶ Irfan Husain. "Give us back Our Country." (Daily Dawn, Nov 24, 2007). Available at <http://dawn.com/weekly/mazdak/20071124.htm>.

⁷ For a detailed study of Ibn Tamiyyah's times and major works see his *Al-Jawab Al-Sahih* translated by Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's response to Christianity*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1984.)

⁸ Details of Wahab-Saud alliance are available in As'ad Abukhal's *The Battle for Saudi Arabia*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004.)

Stabilizing Pakistan: The Importance of Religious Foundations

By Muhammad Junaid Nadvi

The Instability of Pakistan: A Brief Analysis

During the Pakistan Movement, when the idea of Pakistan was put forward, its opponents constantly attempted to create doubts about its future social, economic and political viability and stability. The opponents of the idea of Pakistan mostly concentrated on this theme and now even those friendly to Pakistan seem to be affected by this negative perception of Pakistan. Today, the image of Pakistan portrayed in the international media is that of a failed state,¹ a hazardous place to visit, as well as a victim of violence and terrorism instigated by the bombing of academic institutions, businesses, public places, and strategic areas. Pakistan is also represented as a nuclear state trapped in social, economic and political disorder on the domestic front, while combating externally, on its borders with Afghanistan and India, a crowded safe haven for religious extremists and fundamentalists, governed by a coalition of political parties, after a long military rule, with different views on governing the nation. These images of Pakistan are discussed in the print and digital media in the form of debates and analysis. Information about Pakistan is described by the print media in both an objective and a subjective manner, disseminated through the internet by means of free download facilities, and through seminars and conferences on the subject of Pakistan. Academic degrees are being awarded by universities on dissertations and theses written about the social, economic and political stability of Pakistan.²

The present state of Pakistan creates many questions. Why and how has this image emerged? Why and who is behind this state of affairs? Is there a hidden agenda for the destabilization of Pakistan? What are the intentions of those who discuss Pakistan? What went wrong with Pakistan? Why is Pakistan being portrayed as a failed state? What are the problems faced by Pakistan? What are the adversities and uncertainties caused by the War on Terror? How can Pakistan become stabilized? The answer to these questions requires a comprehensive discourse and cannot be addressed in a single article. However, to respond to these questions, it is imperative to understand the difference and relation between the external and internal factors shaping the current scenario. Therefore, I will first briefly analyze

the underlying issues and factors causing instability in Pakistan, and then recommend a solution for its stability.

Externally, the hegemonic greed of imperial powers, the deep-rooted prejudice of Pakistan's neighbors, Pakistan's self-imposed dependence on others, and the friendly-firing of Western media have all played important roles in creating and portraying a dubious image of Pakistan. While internally, the negative perception of Pakistan has regrettably emerged because of its unstable political system, thus creating social and economic discrimination and disparity that nurtured corruption, nepotism, ethnocentrism and racism. This also entails a lack of freedom of expression, a violation of human rights, and an exploitation of democratic norms. Contamination of the social system is another factor that emerged due to the Western and materialistic impact on social bonds. Moral weakness has spawned social evils like violence, crime, drug addiction and trafficking, bribery, and so on. A lopsided and inadequate educational system is causing an increase in illiteracy, an academic and technological decline, and a weakening of ethical values. Lurching economic unrest and a deteriorating financial system, attributed to non-judicious planning, misuse of natural and human resources and dependence on foreign loans, have resulted in technological and economic regress. In addition, the negative perception of Pakistan is caused by the prevailing religious system, a system not representative of a truly Islamic society.

In the history of Pakistan, all forms of government repeatedly used Islam as a legitimizing ideology to maintain the privileges of the elite, strengthen a deliberately unjust socio-economic order, and to denounce attempts at social change. Equally important in this connection is the fact that it was and still remains difficult for the people of Pakistan to perceive, let alone challenge, any authority that comes enveloped in Islam. In fact the State's approach is to use Islam in particular, and no other element, for the legitimation of its power construct.

The majority of Pakistan's political leaders are not the true representatives of the people. They do not have roots in the masses, but emerge from the isolated minority classes of aristocrats, landlords, the wealthy, industrialists, racists, ethnocentrists, religious ethnicity and bureaucracy. Mostly, their approach toward the nation and its people is deceptive as they modify Islamic teachings and philosophy to support their own interests.³

The negative perception of Pakistan cannot be changed unless domestic turmoil and hostilities in the social, economic and political life of the people come to an end, and until the adversities and uncertainties caused by the War on Terror are removed. Since the creation of Pakistan was based on Islam, the only possible solution to overcome this crisis lies in the adherence and establishment of the religious foundations for which this country was created by Muslims of the sub-continent

with the devotion and sacrifice of their lives and resources. Let us rehearse this argument within its historical context.

Historical Context

Nations are created by the character of their individuals consistent with their ideology and whenever this feature is neglected, degeneration and downfall of the nation becomes the natural consequence. The seed of character sown by Muhammad bin Qāsim⁴, the first Muslim who entered the South Asian sub-continent in 712 (now–India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) was so that for centuries the Muslims ruled this continent. Muhammad bin Qāsim is regarded as the founder of an Islamic state on the sub-continent and the pioneer of Islamic culture and civilization in the area. Because he established such an exemplary Islamic system of government in the region, a large number of impressed Hindus and Buddhists willingly embraced Islam. The impact of the teachings of Islam was so great that the people started to live in accordance with the injunctions of the Qur’ān and Sunnah.⁵

But Muslims of the sub-continent lost their widespread hierarchy due to human weakness, self-indulgence and negligence, which resulted in an absolute alien British hegemony in 1857.⁶ However, the inherent characteristic of Muslims—to reject non-Muslim dominance—gave impetus to the strategy of defiance of foreign imperialist power, which persisted for a long time.

The Hindus, especially Mr. Gāndhī, made several attempts to convince the Muslims that both religions belong to the same country and, as well-wishers of each other, had a common cause to expel the aliens from the sub-continent.⁷ However, a majority of the Muslims realized that even though these two nations have been coexisting for centuries, they cannot be merged because of their distinct temperaments and ideologies which govern the everyday lives of Muslims. This realization resulted in the creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947.⁸ It is worth mentioning that among the Muslim majority there were groups, i.e., the Deobandī school of thought, Jamī‘at ‘Ulmā’-e-Hind and Mawlāna Mawdūdī of Jamāt-e-Islāmī, who were not in the favor of creating Pakistan due to their own logical reasons.

The philosophy and rationale behind the *Two Nation Theory* and Creation of Pakistan can be assumed by understanding the *Ideology of Pakistan*, therefore it is pertinent at this point to interpret the Ideology of Pakistan.

The Ideology of Pakistan

Literally, the word “ideology” means an organized system of beliefs and values, forming the basis of a social, economic, or political philosophy or program. It is a set of beliefs, values, and opinions that shapes the way a person or a group thinks, acts, and understands the world. Generally, ideology is defined as a cluster of be-

liefs, ideals and concepts that have become deeply rooted in the social consciousness of a community over time, and have become entrapped with profound impulse to their ancestral legacy and culture, and is saturated with emotions.⁹ This is a perfect explanation of the *Ideology of Pakistan*. On the contrary, some Muslim politicians and scholars of past and present¹⁰ argue that the struggle for Pakistan was only to achieve a separate geographical identity and not a religious identity. However, the letters, speeches, addresses, messages and interviews of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Nawāb Bahādur Yār Jang, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan¹¹ and a majority of the Muslim politicians, scholars and researchers of the past and present hold the view that the only rationale behind the struggle for Pakistan was to practice the social, economic and political system based on the religious foundations of Islam.¹² The Muslims who were left behind decided to practice their faith by holding Indian citizenship.

It was the natural inclination of Pakistanis which led them to embrace the Islamic ideology and to integrate it within the foundational groundwork of the nation and state. And this ideology is what they generally call “the Islamic way of Life”.¹³ For Pakistan, which is overwhelmingly Muslim, it should not be surprising that her national life and ideals are formed on religious foundations. Pakistanis believe in the eternal spiritual and ethical values of Islam, which have over the centuries provided these people with the inspiration to dream, the energy to actualize their dreaming, and the discipline to keep their personal ambitions within the bounds of overall national goals and general social welfare. Under the influence of Islam and their own historical experience on the sub-continent, the Indo-Pakistani Muslims had developed a tradition of loyalties, emotions and discipline. For them “no morality exists, which does not find its ultimate sanction in Islam”.¹⁴ For Pakistan, therefore, the only enduring polity which can ensure justice and morality in her activities, both within and without, is the one which is based on the transcendent Islamic ideology. This view was held by, among others, Mr. Justice A. R. Cornelius, former Chief Justice of Pakistan. In his inaugural address to the 13th All-Pakistan History Conference at Lahore on April 7, 1963, he asserted that “the ideology should be based on religion”.¹⁵ I. H. Qureshi (1903-1981) elaborates on the ideology of Pakistan as follows: “For us Muslims no morality exists which does not find its ultimate sanction in Islam. The moral concepts of our people are based upon the teachings of our religion. If, therefore, the polity of Pakistan is to be based upon a firm foundation of a religious ideology, there is no motive force but that of Islam which can act as the base”.¹⁶

The Constitution of Pakistan & Religious Foundations

Throughout history, Muslims have maintained an intrinsic quality of not giving consent to non-Islamic Laws. This also happened in the case of Pakistan. A written constitution outlining the fundamental principles or statutes by which a country is governed was approved in light of the Qur'ān¹⁷ and Sunnah. Because “Islam offers a complete code of life; and its principles cover both spiritual and worldly aspects of life. There is no division between Religion and State in Islam. The worldly aspects of life are equally blended with the spiritual aspects.”¹⁸ With this perspective, we shall briefly highlight the religious foundations inculcated in the Constitution of Pakistan.

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) is a solid proof by the inhabitants of this country that Islam is their only choice. It should be noted that this constitution was unanimously approved during the government of the Pakistan People's Party. The importance given to religion can be seen in the Constitution of Pakistan. Because it cannot be easily amended, it is a firm and stiff constitution. Article 239 provides a very rigid procedure for the amendment of the Constitution. A bill of amendment must be passed by two-thirds of the total members of the Assembly and then the Senate must pass this bill by a majority of its total membership.¹⁹ This rigidity in the Constitution is evidence of the commitment of Pakistanis to their religious foundations.

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) is a written document comprised of 280 Articles, 6 schedules and a preamble. According to Article 1, Pakistan shall be a federal republic known as the “Islamic Republic of Pakistan”. It has four provinces, namely, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, Punjab and Sindh. Islamabad was designated the federal capital. The Constitution is based on the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam.²⁰ The most glaring feature of the Constitution of Pakistan is that it is strictly based on the religious foundations of Islam. The preamble of the Constitution clearly declares that “sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone and the authority to be exercised by the people of Pakistan within the limits prescribed by Allah is a sacred trust”. It further says that “it shall fully observe the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice enunciated by Islam”. The Constitution also upholds that “Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teaching and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah”.²¹ Article 2 of the Constitution of Pakistan declares that “steps shall be taken to enable the Muslims of Pakistan to order their lives in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concept of Islam, and to provide facilities whereby they may

be enabled to understand the meaning of life according to the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah".²²

The Islamic Outlook on Religion

To comprehend the relation of religious foundations to the people of Pakistan, it will be useful at this point to emphasize the Islamic philosophy and the Islamic outlook on religion in light of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

Generally, there is a consensus among social scientists that a philosophy, howsoever attractive, remains lifeless and ineffective if not integrated with practice.²³ Such is the case with Muslims, whose own philosophy encompasses every domain of a Muslim's life.²⁴ Islamic philosophy does not only demand followers to have certain beliefs and practice certain rituals, but it also fervently demands adherents' firm belief in the Holy Scriptures,²⁵ sent by Allah through His Messengers, to confirm the Truths of the universe and humankind itself.²⁶ Thus, Islamic philosophy means true belief in the revealed knowledge, total submission to the Will of Allah, to live a life according to the teachings of Allah and his Messengers, and to understand the purpose of humankind's life on this planet as a unit and as an organic whole which cannot be divided into separate compartments.²⁷

In the light of Islamic philosophy, the Islamic religious outlook is that humankind and all other creations owe their existence to Allah alone. The universe was created and administered in accordance with the regulations set by Allah, known as "Laws of Nature". Islam negates the mechanical concept of the universe, which claims that it is the product of an accident. The whole universe is subservient to humankind for its use and benefit. Life for humankind in this world is a place of trial on which depends its life in the Hereafter. Allah alone is the Sovereign; this concept of sovereignty gave birth to the concept of the equality and unity of humankind. It slashes the roots of the rule of humankind over humankind, and negates the concept of kingship, dictatorship, priesthood, and Brahmanism. Every one is equal in the eyes of Islam. All humans enjoy equal rights and can seek redress, if wronged, through a court of law. Everyone has protection of his life, property and respect. This outlook is based on *Wahī* (revelation), which demands a believer to adopt a balance between the requirements of body and soul and function for the larger interest of human good, through which nations rise and fall.²⁸ On the basis of the previously mentioned Islamic philosophy and Islamic outlook on religion, we should now understand the religious foundations of Islam.

The Religious Foundations of Islam

Sociologist Johnstone (1975) defines religion as a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interpret and respond to what they feel is supernatural

and sacred.²⁹ This definition emphasizes the social and corporate nature of religion and distinguishes religions from secular concepts, which may also be concerned with important values. According to Horton (1984), religion is concerned with much more than just moral behavior. Religion offers people a worldview and provides answers for confusing questions. It encourages the individual to rise above self-centered interests and involve oneself with the needs of others. Good conduct may result from such a worldview, but the religious response goes far beyond the adherence to conventional behavioral norms.³⁰ Religious beliefs, institutions, and rituals have been major elements in the cultural patterns of most societies, which can scarcely be questioned. Even in modern societies of today, many of the old values and traditions are rooted in religion; the evidence of religious influence is rich. Millions of people worship, celebrate holy days, and perform private and public religious ceremonies, both privately and officially, according to their religious beliefs.³¹ According to Smelser (1963), humankind possesses a general tendency to dwell communally. This trend of collectivity is based on foundations which may be either religious or non-religious. This tendency has prevailed throughout human history. Today, humans enjoying a communal life are characterized by nations or countries on the basis of religious or non-religious foundations.³²

Like other world communities or nations, Muslims, entitled as *Ummah*,³³ constitute a nation which emerged on the basis of common faith. They claim that the designations of *Muslims*³⁴ and *Ummah*³⁵ have been given by Allah to their nation. *Ummah* is therefore, a higher entity than tribe, community, nation, country or state. It simply means that all the humans of this world who are of different race, colour, language or geographical origin, but believe in Allah and the Prophecy of Muhammad are one *Ummah* (nation).³⁶ It is a philosophy, which claims the universal concepts of humanity, brotherhood and equality.³⁷ Islam regards religion as the way to conduct life on earth. Religion has no other purpose than this. It is a dimension of earthly life realized in full when that life is lived morally under Allah, i.e., with responsibility to nature, to oneself and to society.³⁸ As a religion, Islam stands as a collective force in society and places great confidence in the ability of reason to discover ultimate metaphysical truths. Islam also prescribes values for ordering human life. It necessarily accepts the existence of Supreme Being (Allah), and assumes that His existence does carry significance for human life. The business of life is conducted on the assumption that there is a life after death and that there is accountability before Allah. Unlike dominant secular views, Islam concerns itself with the material aspects of life, and its essential principle is that human well-being can be brought about not only by material means but also by moral values endorsed by religion.³⁹

In the following section, I will briefly discuss the essential religious foundations of Islam and then try to explain how they shape the behavior of a Muslim.

Īmān (Faith) should be taken into account as the first religious foundation. Lexicons describe the word “Faith” as belief, assurance, confidence, constancy, conviction, commitment, dedication, devotion, faithfulness, loyalty, reliance and trust.⁴⁰ Faith without action and practice is a dead end as far as Islam is concerned. Faith by nature is very sensitive and can be most effective. When it is out of practice, it quickly loses its liveliness and motivating power. The only way to enliven Faith and make it serve its purpose is through practice. Practice provides Faith with nourishment, survival and effectiveness. In return, Faith inspires humankind to be constant in its devotion and persistent in its practice. This is because the interrelationship between Faith and practice is very strong, and interdependence is readily understandable. A person without Faith has no real source of inspiration and consequently has no worthy objectives to attain.⁴¹ Faith has three important components: *Tawhīd* or Unity of Allah, *Risālah* or Prophecy of Muhammad, and *Ākhirah* (the life after death).

Tawhīd (Unity of Allah) is the first component of Faith,⁴² which means that there is only One Supreme Lord of the universe. He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and the Sustainer of the world and humankind.⁴³ Unity of Allah sums up the Islamic way of life and presents it in a nutshell, the essence of Islamic civilization. It is the one term which describes the *process* of the Islamic transformation of an individual or a society. In human history it presents the crux of prophetic mission, having been the sheet-anchor of all revealed religions. It is specially suited to describe the characteristic and abiding contribution of the last of the prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him) in history. The Principle of *Tawhīd* also lays the foundation of Islamic social order, which teaches humankind that their social, economic and political activities must be guided by the principles from a single common source. This single common source reveals its principles through the Qur’ān, which are elaborated by the Sunnah.⁴⁵

Risālah (Prophethood of Muhammad) is the second component of Faith.⁴⁶ *Risālah* literally means “Apostleship”, and in technical terms it means the office of an Apostle or Prophet who was sent by Allah to humankind to convey His religious injunctions. Another name for the Prophethood is “*Nubūwah*”.⁴⁷ The sending of these prophets from Allah is a clear manifestation of a strong link between Heaven and Earth, between Allah and humankind.⁴⁸ It means that humankind is reformable and in it there is much good. The purpose of prophethood is to confirm what humankind already knows or can know, and to teach him what he does not or cannot know by his own means. It is also to help humankind to find the straight path of Allah, to do the right and leave the wrong. Prophethood Allah’s love for His creations and His will to guide them to the right way of belief and behavior.⁴⁹

Ākhirah (Hereafter)⁵⁰ is the third component of Faith. It serves as an important force to control the human behavior of a Muslim.⁵¹ Without this faith he cannot become a true believer. In its absence, the faith in Allah becomes meaningless because the Afterlife is actually an implication of the many attributes of Allah such as Justice, Wisdom, Kindness, Recognition of Virtue and Supremacy. Since, in this world, very often the moral consequences of human actions do not come as opportunity when everyone will get due reward for his actions, it will result in a situation which would negate the Justness, the Wisdom, the Compassion and the Supremacy of Almighty Allah.⁵²

In light of the above explanations, it now stands established that the three components of Faith---*Tawhīd*, *Risālah* and *Ākhirah*---are each equally required to be a true Muslim. Now, the question is *how do they work in shaping Muslim behavior?* The aforesaid three components of Faith produce a set of human values, which control the individual behavior of a Muslim in his social, economic, and political activities. These values impart a sense of accountability in a Muslim and eventually create transparency in all his deeds. A true Muslim, fearing the consequences of accountability in life after death, will always remain vigilant to the injunctions of Allah and the Prophet. Hence, each action of every true Muslim, governed by this spirit and sense of accountability, will undoubtedly initiate a series of reactions that will develop a harmonious and settled society leading to a flourishing and stable nation.⁵³

Sharī'ah (Islamic Law) should be regarded as the second religious foundation. *Sharī'ah* is a precise body of laws which guides Muslims in all spheres of human life, i.e., physical, metaphysical, individual, collective, religious, social, economic and political.⁵⁴ It is a code of conduct or action for the Muslims, which is based on two main sources: The Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah.⁵⁵ The rationale for Islamic Law called *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* is *Falāh* (welfare). Its objective is to facilitate and create stability in the worldly life of Muslims.⁵⁶ It means that all human activities should be directed toward the achievements of *Falāh*. *Falah* is a comprehensive term, which denotes all-sided welfare of this life as well as that of the Hereafter.⁵⁷ *Falāh* must not be confused with the term welfare as used in the sense of secular economics. Economic welfare is just one instrument to achieve the objective of *Falāh*.⁵⁸ The purpose of Islamic Law is to control the social, economic and political behavior of a Muslim.⁵⁹ A Muslim in fact, not merely in profession, is a person whose deeds are determined by the *Sharī'ah*, or the law of Islam. Some of these laws have to do with his own person, such as those which pertain to rituals, seeking to affect either his state of consciousness or his body. The former are not meant to produce hollow, disembodied spirituality. On the other hand, those which seek to affect his body are material by nature. To fulfil them is to act economically.

His moral merit on that front is directly proportional to his success in seeking Allah's bounty.⁶⁰

***Khilāfah* (Vicegerency or Caliphate of Humankind)**

This concept should be conceived as the third religious foundation.⁶¹ Islam uses the term 'Vicegerency' (*Khilāfah*) instead of sovereignty. According to Islam, sovereignty belongs to Allah alone. Anyone who holds power and rules in accordance with the laws of Allah would undoubtedly be the vicegerent of the Supreme Ruler and would not be authorized to exercise any powers other than those delegated to him.⁶² The second point stated in verse 24:55 of the Qur'ān is that the power to rule over the earth has been promised to *the whole community* of believers; it has not been said that any particular person or class among them will be raised to that position. From this it follows that all believers are repositories of the Caliphate [*Khilāfah*]. The Caliphate granted by Allah to the faithful is popular vicegerency and not a limited one. There is no reservation in favor of any family, class or race. Every believer is a Caliph of Allah in his individual capacity. By virtue of this position he is individually responsible to Allah. The Holy Prophet said: "Everyone of you is a ruler and everyone is answerable for his subjects." Thus, one Caliph is in no way inferior to another.⁶³

The preceding argument explicates that humankind is the vicegerent of Allah on Earth, and all the resources of this world are at his disposal as a trust.⁶⁴ This concept is pertinent to every Muslim individual, but in its collective meaning, it applies to the whole Muslim *Ummah*. Attainment of such conceptual maturity will undoubtedly create a just and caring society and a politically, socially, economically and religiously stable nation.

Ummah, Akhuwwah, Wahdah

The concepts of *Akhuwwah* (Brotherhood), *Ummah* (Nation), and *Wahdah* (Unity) should together be considered as the fourth religious foundation.

Ummah connotes that all the Muslims of this World are One Nation.⁶⁵ This concept reminds a Muslim of his collective status and behavior. This also reminds the Muslims of Pakistan of their status which demands a unified behavior in their religious, social, economic and political affairs. The citations of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in the footnote further elaborate this concept.⁶⁶

Akhuwwah designates all the believers as brothers. It also connotes that, to Allah, social status, national superiority, and racial origin are insignificant. Before Him, all men are equal and brothers to one another.⁶⁷ A Muslim has to believe in the unity of mankind with regard to the source of creation, the original parentage, and final destiny. The source of creation is Allah Himself. The original common parent-

age is that of Adam and Eve.⁶⁸ To this first parentage, every human being belongs and partakes. As for final destiny, there is no doubt in a Muslim's mind that it will be to Allah, the Creator, to Whom all men shall return.⁶⁹

Waḥdah refers to the Unity of the Muslim Community.⁷⁰ According to Nisbet (1996), the concept of community means all forms of relationship that are characterized by a high degree of personal relationship, intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity in time. It may be found in locality, religion, nation, race occupation, or common cause.⁷¹ Broom (1968) states: "In another basic sense, a community or nation is a comprehensive group with two chief characteristics: (1) It is a group in which the individual can have most of the activities and experiences that are important to him. (2) The group is bound together by a shred sense of belonging and a feeling of identity".⁷²

Summarizing the preceding discussion, it is evident that these concepts can only be practiced through the solidarity of faith and unanimity of views termed as *Bunyānun Marsūs* (a solid cemented structure) by the Holy Qur'ān.⁷³ Intellectual unanimity creates conformity in the working approach.

Akhlāq (Morality/Ethics) should be regarded as the fifth religious foundation. Morality is defined as a moral discourse, statement, or lesson; a doctrine or system of moral conduct; or conformity to ideals of right human conduct.⁷⁴ These definitions are similar in temperament to the concept of morality in Islam, with the exception of the reward of Hereafter. The concept of morality in Islam centers on the fundamental beliefs which have been discussed in detail in the preceding sections.

The dimensions of morality in Islam are numerous, far-reaching, and comprehensive. Islamic morals deal with the relationship between humankind and Allah, humankind and his fellowmen, humankind and the other elements and creatures of the universe, and humankind and his innermost self. The Muslim must guard his external behavior and his manifest deeds, his words and his thoughts, his feelings and intentions. In a general sense, his role is to advocate what is right and fight against what is wrong, seek what is true and abandon what is false, cherish what is beautiful and decent, and avoid what is indecent. Truth and virtue are his goals. Humbleness, simplicity, courtesy, compassion, are his second nature. To him arrogance and self-importance, harshness and unconcern are distasteful, offensive, and displeasing to Allah.⁷⁵ More specifically, the Muslim's relationship with Allah is one of love, obedience, complete trust, thoughtfulness, peace, appreciation, steadfastness and active service. This high-level morality will, undoubtedly, nourish and reinforce morality at the human level. In his relationship with fellow men, the Muslim must show kindness to kin and concern for the neighbor, respect for the elderly and compassion for the young, care for the sick and support for the needy,

sympathy for the grieving and cheer for the depressed, joy for the blessed and patience with the misguided, tolerance toward the ignorant and forgiveness of the helpless, disapproval of the wrong and rise for the negligible. Moreover, he must respect the legitimate rights of others as much as he does his own. His mind must be occupied with constructive ideas and serious pursuits, his heart must beat with compassionate feelings and good will, his soul must radiate with peace and serenity; his counsel must be sincere and courteous.⁷⁶

The limitation of this paper does not permit me to discuss the morals of Islam in detail. Therefore, we shall briefly describe some important morals of Islam, in alphabetical order. Needless to say, these morals are identical to universally accepted morals, with the only exception being their interpretations found in different religions.

Islamic Morality⁷⁷

Attitude towards Non-Muslims: It is a positive, conscious attitude pertaining to social, economic and political differences or dealings. It is the liability of a Muslim to always stand supportive for piety, fairness and justice.⁷⁸

Communal Etiquettes: Generally, it is a set of rules of acceptable behavior which governs the behavior of a Muslim in society. In specific situations it dictates a social, economic and political performance. Communal etiquettes of Islam reflect unity, discipline, respect and affiliation between people during assemblies.⁷⁹

Compassion means kindness, concern, benevolence and sympathy for the suffering of other humans and the desire to help them. It is a moral value of Islam which results in the beautiful rewards of this world and the Hereafter. On one hand, it is a source of attaining spiritual peace and happiness of heart and mind, and on the other, a source for creating peace and socio-economic harmony in society.⁸⁰

Cooperation is a shared effort by individuals and groups of a society to achieve a common social, economic and political goal. Cooperation in righteous deeds is a high moral value of Islam. Muslims are instructed to cooperate with each other in all matters which are righteous.⁸¹

Forgiveness: Needless to say, humans do make errors or mistakes because it is the part of their nature. It is a social phenomenon present in all human societies. But at the same time, forgiveness is also the part of human nature. For this reason, forgiveness is measured as a very high social value in Islam. It creates peace and harmony in society.⁸²

Generosity is a multidimensional term used for all kinds of noble and moral activities of a human for another fellow human. Often equated with charity as a virtue, generosity is widely accepted in society as a desirable habit. In times of natural disaster, relief efforts are frequently provided, voluntarily, by individuals or groups

acting unilaterally in making gifts of time, resources, goods, money, etc. For a Muslim, it means spending time, money or labor for others without requiring reciprocation from the people, but only from Allah.⁸³

Hard-work improves the socio-economic status at individual and collective level. The encouragement for hard work to change the socio-economic conditions and the consequences of not following this moral value are declared in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.⁸⁴

Justice & Fairness are the basic principles of all transactions. It is immoral and sinful to possess wealth by fraud, dishonesty or other evil practices. The concept of brotherhood itself negates the idea of exploitation of one by another. The concept of the Muslim social, economic and political system becomes worthless without adherence to this moral value.⁸⁵

Moderation is a principle moral value of the economic system of Islam. It is applicable to all. The result of holding this moral value is always fruitful. Adoption of this principle is essential for economic cooperation among Muslims.⁸⁶

Modesty & Chastity is a value, which has a strong relation with the religious, social and economic system of Islam. All such activities are prohibited, which harm the moral fiber of Islamic society. There should be no economic cooperation in such activities.⁸⁷

Persistence is the quality of continuing steadily despite difficulties. This is the moral value which brings success in all human affairs. Social, economic and political hardships are a part of human life. Persistence, steadfastness and discipline are their solution.⁸⁸

Prosperity is the condition of enjoying wealth, success, or good fortune. It becomes a moral value of a Muslim because prosperity of both lives is the fundamental objective of Islam. A prosperous Muslim is the deep-seated desire of Islam. Encouragement to pursue economic benefits of both worlds can be seen in these citations.⁸⁹

Reconciliation means ending of conflict or renewing of a friendly relationship between disputing people or groups in case of hostilities at both an individual and a collective level. Muslims should adhere to this moral value during social, economic and political conflicts.⁹⁰

Reliance: The concept of reliance has a different definition in Islam. Reliance (*Tawakkal 'A-lal-Allah*), means absolute dependence, confidence and trust in Allah Almighty in all kinds of individual and collective activities. This concept emerges from an unshakeable faith in *Allah, Subhāna hū wa t'āla*.⁹¹

Responsibility is the state, fact or position of being accountable to somebody for one's actions. The concept of responsibility in Islam has twofold implications on the behavior of a Believer. A Muslim is accountable for his social, economic and

political deeds not only to the society where he dwells but also equally accountable to Allah on the Day of Judgment. This concept of morality keeps a Muslim vigilant in all of his activities.⁹²

Self-Defense is a universally accepted moral right. It means that a person has a legal right to defend himself, his family and property against a physical attack with use reasonable force. It also entails combative techniques to defend a country by its natives against physical attack. Defense of ideology by means other than physical war or action is also defined under this term. The meaning of self-defense in Islam is not only to defend territorial boundaries but also to defend religious, social, economic and political moral values.⁹³

Supplication means humble and sincere appeal made to an authority. The authority to appeal and the power to approve requests is reserved for Allah in Islam. It is a spiritual link between the Creator and His Creation. Supplication is the strongest source of aspiration, confidence and refuge in the life of a Muslim during his spiritual, social, economic and political activities.⁹⁴

Trustworthiness means moral uprightness. It is a quality, condition or characteristic of being fair, truthful and morally upright. This is a universal moral value applicable to an individual and nation. Adherence to this moral value brings respect, regard and prosperity in this world. The concept of trustworthiness in Islam is related to the sense that a Muslim is accountable to Allah for not observing this moral value.⁹⁵

Religious Foundations & the Stability of Pakistan

In the light of the previous discussion, we have established a thesis that the religious foundations of Islam are essential for the stability of Pakistan. It is very important to understand that the Muslims of Pakistan have a history based on religious foundations. The ideology and the Constitution of Pakistan have also emerged from these foundations. The Muslims of Pakistan are tied by the knots of faith and Sharī'ah, the concepts of Khilāfah, One-Nation, Brotherhood, and Unity, and with their own concept of morality. Naturally, they demand the implementation of a social, economic and political code of life of their choosing. Unfortunately, present instability in Pakistan is due to the fact that this universally accepted right of Pakistani Muslims has not been recognized by internal and external forces which hold and manipulate political and economic power as well as the resources of this country for their own vested interests. Therefore, it is obvious that the people are using means, not recommended by Islam. These means are creating social, economic, political and religious instability in Pakistan, i.e., extremism, violence, terrorism, bombing, suicide attacks on institutions, businesses, public places, and strategic areas. Hence,

we can safely recommend the religious foundation of Islam as the only viable option to sublimate the instincts, aspirations and desires of the people, and put Pakistan on the road to social, economic and political stability.

Conclusion & Recommendations

- This research has conceived five Religious Foundations for the stability of Pakistan, i.e., (1) *Īmān*, (2) *Sharī'ah*, (3) *Khilāfah*, (4) *Ummah*, *Akhurwah*, *Wahdah*, and (5) *Akhlāq*.
- Religious foundations can possibly unite the psychological knots and complexities of Pakistan, because they have the potential to sublimate the instincts, aspirations, and disciplinary desires and the whole course of social, economic and political life of Pakistan.
- Religious foundations encourage Pakistanis to rise above self-centered interests and involve themselves with the needs of others. They educate and train Pakistanis for hope and patience, for truthfulness and honesty, for the love of right and good, and for courage and endurance, which are all required for the mastery of the great art of living. The results of this can only be achieved when the people of Pakistan faithfully observe the spiritual duties and physical regulations introduced by Islam. It is spiritual poverty which has led to social, economic and political crises in Pakistan.
- Gaining and maintaining stability is a shared effort by individuals, social, economic, political, and religious units. The people of Pakistan must re-discover and re-examine their own potentials and resources, and find a wise and enduring path to move onwards. For this, along with Islamic knowledge, a deeper understanding of the contemporary problems and issues and the capability of the nation to jointly seek solutions to these problems in light of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah will also be very important for the stability of Pakistan.
- The vision of establishing Pakistan as a great Muslim nation still remains unfulfilled. Even the direction and destiny of Pakistan remains undetermined. The lip service for Islam has not and cannot fulfill the ambitions of the Muslims of this country. They are frustrated and ambitious for change. This is the proper time for the political and religious leaders and thinkers to read, analyze and understand the necessity of time, and work towards the stability of Pakistan. If this task is not undertaken now, then the instability of Pakistan will—God forbid—become its destiny.
- Results of a philosophy can only be achieved through political power.

Notes:

¹ Foreign Minister of India said: “Pakistan is getting close to a Failed State”. (Rawalpindi: The Daily Jang Newspaper, March 18, 2009), p.1. also: Associated Press (AP).

² See, examples of B-s, Journals, Media, Newspapers, Reports, Seminar, Survey, Thesis, Web-Articles portraying the image of Pakistan. B-s: Cohen, Stephen P. *The Idea of Pakistan*, 2005; Haqqani, Husain. *Pakistan: Between Mosque & Military*, 2008; Hussain, Zahid. *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam*, 2007; Siddiq, Ayesha. *Military Incorporated: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, 2004 & 2007; Lamb, Christina; *Waiting for Allah: Pakistan's Struggle for Democracy* (Hamish Hamilton Ltd.1991); Jan, Tarik. *Pakistan between Secularism and Islam: Ideology, Issues and Conflict* (Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad, 1998); Pipes, Daniel. *In the Path of God, Islam and Political Power* (New York: Basic Books, Inc.,1983); Ahsan, Aitzaz. *The Indus Saga & the Making of Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 1996); Akbar, S. Ahmed. *Pakistan Society: Islam, Ethnicity and Leadership In South Asia* (Oxford University Press, 1986); Ahmed, Ishtiaq. *The Concept of an Islamic State: an Analysis of the Ideological Controversy in Pakistan* (University of Stockholm, Stockholm: Dept. of Political Science, 1985); Journals: Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni Identities* (*Modern Asian Studies* V- 32, Issue. 3, 1998); Stern, Jessica. *Pakistan's Jihad Culture* (*Foreign Affairs*, Nov-Dec 2000); Stern, Jessica. *How Terrorists Hijacked Islam* (*USA Today*, Sep 2001); Hassan Riaz. *Religion, Society and State in Pakistan* (*Asian Survey*, V-27 Issue 5, May 1987); Ayoob, Muhammad. *Two faces of Political Islam: Iran and Pakistan Compared* (*Asian Survey*, V-19, Issue. 6, June 1979); Media: Associated Press (AP); Reuters Group PLC; National Public Radio (NPR); BBC; CNN; Newspapers: Ali, Mubarak. *In the name of Pakistan Studies* (Karachi: DAWN, Newspaper, Saturday, February 26, 2005), p.20.; Reports: *International Religious Freedom Report*, Section: Pakistan by the Bureau of Democracy. (Human Rights and Labor, October 2001); Seminar: *Democratic Transition and the Role of Islam in Asia* (Asian Perspective Seminar October 18th, 2000); Survey: Weiss, Anita M. *Women's Position in Pakistan: Socio-cultural Effects of Islamisation* (*Asian Survey*, V- 25, No. 8. Aug 1985); Thesis: Aslam, Maleeha. *The Process & Impact of Ideologization of Islam in Pakistan* (M.Phil. Thesis) (UK: Wolfson College, University of Cambridge) <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASASpapers/49MaleehaAslam.pdf>.; Websites: Rizvi, Shahid. *Against Religious Interference in State Affairs of Pakistan*, <<http://www.sydasien.m.se/religion>>; Sha-faat, Ahmad. *Military Dictatorship has no Place in Islam*, Website: Pakistan Link 1983; Chossudovsky, Michel. *The Destabilization of Pakistan* (Global Research,

- December 30, 2007) www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=7746.
- ³ Today, these facts are not even hidden from a common man of Pakistan. The Governmental, National & International reports also confirms these facts.
- ⁴ An Arab General and nephew of Hajjaj, ruler of Iraq and Persia, conquered Sindh and incorporated it into the Umayyad Caliphate.
- ⁵ Kadri, Justice Syed Shameem Hussain. *Creation of Pakistan* (Rawalpindi: Army B- Club, GHQ, 1983), foreword, pp. vii-viii.
- ⁶ Ali, Chaudhri Muhammad. *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Lahore: Services B- Club, 1988), pp.1-6.
- ⁷ Kadri, foreword, p. vii-viii, preface, p. ix-x.
- ⁸ Qureshi, Ishtiaq Hussain. *The Struggle for Pakistan* (Karachi: 1974), p.19.
- ⁹ Encarta®, Microsoft®. *Ideology* (USA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).
- ¹⁰ See some examples in footnote # 6.
- ¹¹ Mujahid, Sharif al-. *Ideological Foundations of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Shari'ah Academy, International Islamic University Islamabad, 1999). See full-text of 27 letters, addresses, messages & interviews.
- ¹² Names of the persons, associations, religious and political parties are not being mentioned intentionally, to avoid confrontation, which already exists in this county.
- ¹³ Mujahid, Sharif al-. *Ideological Foundations of Pakistan*, pp.220-221.
- ¹⁴ Mujahid, Sharif al-. *Ideological Foundations of Pakistan*, p.220.
- ¹⁵ *The Pakistan Times*. April 8, 1963, pp.1, 5. In: Mujahid, Sharif al-. *Ideological Foundations of Pakistan*, p.220.
- ¹⁶ Qureshi, Ishtiaq Hussain. *Pakistan: An Islamic Democracy* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1951), p.5.
- ¹⁷ *Al-Qur'ān*. See: 2:28; 2:148; 2:246-248; 4:163; 4:150-151; 5:100; 6:32; 13: 31; 19:76; 21:33; 23: 12-13; 23: 51-52; 28:68; 32:9; 37: 142; 40:78; 51:21; 67:2; 73:20.
- ¹⁸ Kadri, Justice Syed Shameem Hussain., p.2.
- ¹⁹ *Constitution of Pakistan*. Article-239. <www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/> <www.na.gov.pk/publications/constitution_pakistan.aspx>
- ²⁰ _____, Article-1.
- ²¹ _____, Preamble.
- ²² _____, Article-2.
- ²³ Hunt, Elgin F., & Colander, David C., *Social Science* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), For details, see: pp. 311-312, 328-330.
- ²⁴ *Al-Qur'ān*: 13: 31; 21:33; 32:9; 23: 12-13, 28:68.
- ²⁵ *Al-Qur'ān*: 2:28; 51:21; 2:246-248; 37: 142.
- ²⁶ *Al-Qur'ān*: 4:163; 40:78; 23: 51&52; 4: 150-151.
- ²⁷ *Al-Qur'ān*: 67:2; 73:20; 5:100; 6:32; 2:148; 19:76.

²⁸ Adapted from: Malik, Abdul Hakeem. *QUR'ĀNIC PRISM: Trilingual subject index of Holy Qur'ān* (Pakistan/UK/USA: Islamic Research Foundation, 3rd ed., 2002); Nawawi, Abu Zakariya Yahya-ibn-Sharaf al-. *Riyād al-Salihīn*, English tr., Muhammad Saghir Hasan Masumi. *Gardens of the Righteous* (Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 1992); Rizavi, M. N. *THE FINAL MESSAGE OF GOD: The substance of the Holy Qur'an arranged topic wise* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, IIU, 1996); Irving, Thomas Ballantine, Ahmad, Khurshid & Ahsan, M. M. *THE QUR'AN: Basic Teachings* (Islamabad: Da'wah Academy, IIU, 1994).

²⁹ Johnstone, Ronald. *Religion and Society in Interaction: The Sociology of Religion* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1975), p.20.

³⁰ Horton, Paul B. & Hunt, Chester L. *Sociology* (Singapore: McGraw-Hill International Editions, 6th ed., 1984), p. 266.

³¹ Hunt, Elgin F., pp. 311-312.

³² Smelser, Neil J. *Theory of Collective Behaviour* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), p.8.

³³ The word "Ummah" has been used by Holy Qur'ān for: Muslims (*Al-Qur'ān* 2:143; 3:110); for a tribe, community or nation; for all mankind (*Al-Qur'ān* 2:213); for Abraham, peace be upon him, (*Al-Qur'ān* 16:120); for beasts and birds (*Al-Qur'ān* 6:38).

³⁴ " --- . It is He Who has named you Muslims, ---; that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! ---" (*Al-Qur'ān* 22:78).

³⁵ "Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah ..." (*Al-Qur'ān* 3:110); also *Al-Qur'ān* 2:143.

³⁶ "Allah did confer a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been in manifest error". (*Al-Qur'ān* 3:164).

³⁷ "And verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, ---". (*Al-Qur'ān* 23:52); "---: So make peace and reconciliation between your two brothers;---". (49:10).

³⁸ Fārūqī, Ismā'il Rāji al-. *Is the Muslim Definable in Terms of His Economic Pursuits?* in: Ahmad, Khurshid & Ansari, Zafar Ishaq, (eds.), *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Mawlāna Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī*, p.191.

³⁹ Chapra, Muhammad Omer. *Islam and Economic Development* (Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), p.11.

⁴⁰ Encarta®, Microsoft®. *Faith* (USA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

⁴¹ Abdalati, Hammudah. *Islam in Focus* (Riyadh: World Assembly of Muslim Youth, 1983), Pp.53-54.

⁴² **Knowledge of Allah:** *Al-Qur 'ān* 2:140; 2:144; 2:149; 2:187; 2:197; 2:216; 2:220; 2:232; 2:234; 2:246-247; 3:29; 3:66; 3:7; 3:98-99; 3:115; 3:153-154; 3:167; 4:25.

Attributes of Allah: *Al-Qur 'ān* 2:143; 2:185; 2:218-219; 2:221; 2:225; 2:255-257; 2:261; 2:265; 2:268; 2:283; 2:286; 3:2; 3:15; 3:20; 3:30-31; 3:34; 3:68; 3:108; 5:101. **Power & authority of Allah:** *Al-Qur 'ān* 2:148; 2:202; 2:212; 2:220; 2:224; 2:228; 2:240; 2:245; 2:247; 2:249; 2:251; 2:253; 2:259; 2:282; 2:284; 3:11; 3:13; 3:26-27.

⁴³ “Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him”. *Al-Qur 'ān* 112:1-4.

⁴⁵ Choudhury, Masudul Alam. *Islamic Economic co-operation* (London: The Macmillan press Ltd., 1989), p.7.

⁴⁶ “Allah did confer a great favour on the believers when --- while, before that, they had been in manifest error”. (*Al-Qur 'ān* 3:164); also: *Al-Qur 'ān* 33:21.

⁴⁷ Islāhī, Sadaruddīn. *Islam at a Glance, Translator: Sheikh Zafar Iqbal* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 7th edition, 1996), p.26.

⁴⁸ “Muhammad is the messenger of Allāh; and those who are with him --- . Allāh has promised --- them --- a great Reward”. (*Al-Qur 'ān* 48:29).

⁴⁹ Abdalati, Hammudah., p.27.

⁵⁰ Hereafter: *Al-Qur 'ān* 2:4, 2:102, 2:114, 2:130, 2:177, 2:200, 2:217, 2:220, 2:281, 3:14, 3:22, 3:56-57, 3:77, 3:85, 3:116-117, 3:145, 3:148, 3:152, 3:176, 3:185, 4:77. See, more in: Nadvi, Muhammad Junaid. *Index of Qur 'ānic Verses on Islamic Economics* (Islamabad: Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University, 2nd ed., 2006).

⁵¹ “Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?” (*Al-Qur 'ān* 23:115); also: 3:185.

⁵² Islāhī, Sadaruddīn. *Islam at a Glance*, p.20.

⁵³ Adapted from: Jabbar, Abdul. *A Call to Unity and Action* (Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 2nd ed., 1985), p.29.

⁵⁴ “O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, ---”. *Al-Qur 'ān* 2:172; also: *Al-Qur 'ān* 2:57; 7:160; 20:81.

⁵⁵ Ahmad, Khurshid. (ed.) *Islam: its meaning and message* (UK: The Islamic Foundation Leicester, 1993), p.22.

⁵⁶ “It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; --- ; and of all things He hath perfect knowledge”. (*Al-Qur 'ān* 2:29).

⁵⁷ “The believers must win through, --- “. (*Al-Qur 'ān* 23:1); also: *Al-Qur 'ān* 23:10; 2:201; 87:14-15.

⁵⁸ **Concept of Falāh:** “ --- There are men who say: “Our Lord! Give us (Thy bounties) in this world!” but they will have no portion in the Hereafter. And there are men who say: “Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and

defend us from the torment of the Fire!” (*Al-Qur’ān* 2:200-201); **Concept of two lives:** *Al-Qur’ān* 2:86; 2:114; 2:130; 2:200-201; 2:212; 2:217; 2:262; 3:14-15; 3:56; 3:117; 3:145; 3:148; 3:152; 3:158; 3:185; 4:77.

⁵⁹ “The Evil one threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly. Allah promiseth you His forgiveness and bounties. --- (*Al-Qur’ān* 2:268); also:2:60.

⁶⁰ Fārūqī, Ismā’īl Rāji al-, Pp.188-189.

⁶¹ *Al-Qur’ān* 57:7: “--- whereof He has made you heirs ---”.

⁶² Mawdūdī, Sayyid Abul A’lā. *Political Theory of Islām*, in: Ahmad, Khurshid (ed.). *Islām: its meaning and message*, p.168.

⁶³ Mawdūdī, *Political Theory of Islām*, p.168.

⁶⁴ “--- I will create a vicegerent on earth---” (*Al-Qur’ān* 2:30); “O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth--- “. (*Al-Qur’ān* 38:26).

⁶⁵ The word “Ummah” has been used by the Holy Qur’ān: (i) for the Muslims (*Al-Qur’ān* 2:143; 3:110); (ii) for a tribe, community, or a nation; (iii) for all mankind (*Al-Qur’ān* 2:213); (iv) for one Man: Abraham, peace be upon him, (*Al-Qur’ān* 16:120); (v) for beasts and birds (*Al-Qur’ān* 6:38).

⁶⁶ “Thus, We have made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, ---”. (2:143); also: 3:110,4:135, 21:92, 23:52. *Ḥadīth*: “A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other”. --- “Help and recommend him ---”. Bukhāri: B- 8, V- 73, H55, Abu Musa®.

⁶⁷ “The Believers are but a single Brotherhood---”. (*Al-Qur’ān* 49:10); “And (more-over) He hath put affection between their hearts --- “. (*Al-Qur’ān* 8:63).

⁶⁸ “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other ---”.(*Al-Qur’ān* 49:13).

⁶⁹ “And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; --- “. (*Al-Qur’ān* 3:103). *Ḥadīth*: “None of you can be a believer unless he loves for his brother what he loves for himself”.---”. Muslim: B- 32, *Ḥadīth* 6250, Salim; Muslim: B-32, *Ḥadīth* 6223, Abū Hurayra®.

⁷⁰ “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations & tribes, that ye may know each other. --- “.(*Al-Qur’ān* 49:13).

⁷¹ Nisbet, Robert. *The Sociological Tradition* (New York: Basic B-s, 1996), Pp. 47-48.

⁷² Broom, L. & Selznick, P. *Sociology: A Text with Adapted Readings* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1968), p.31.

⁷³ “Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure”. (*Al-Qur’ān* 61:4).

⁷⁴ Britannica, Encyclopedia. *Morality* (Merriam Webster’s Dictionary & Thesau-

rus, Ultimate Reference Suite,2008).

⁷⁵ Abdalati, Hammudah., p.40.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Pp.40-41. Also see, *Al-Qur'ān*: 2:177.

⁷⁷ Due to the limitations of this paper, text of Holy Qurān & Ḥadīth have been excluded from the Footnotes.

⁷⁸ *Al-Qur'ān*: 2:256; 6:68-70; 6:108;16:125;29:46. *Ḥadīth*: (Abū Dāwūd: B-41, H-4850, Jābir ibn 'Abdullah®); (Bukhārī: B-3, V-43, H-637 'Āisha®).

⁷⁹ *Al-Qur'ān*: 4:86; 4:93; 5:8; 17:28; 25:63; 31:18; 41:34; 83:29-31. *Ḥadīth*: (Bukhari: B--1, V-2, H--10, Abu Musa®). (Muslim: B- 32, H-6219, Abū Hurayra®). (Bukhārī: B- 3, V- 43, H- 639, 'Abdullah bin 'Amr® & H-33 V-1); (Abū Dāwūd: B- 41, H- 4850, Jābir ibn 'Abdullah®); (Bukhārī: B- 3, V-43, H- 637 'Āisha®); (Abū Sa'īd Sa'd ibn Mālik ib Sinān al-Khudrī®); (Abū Dāwūd: B--41, H-4859, Abū Hurayrah®); (Abū Dāwūd: B--41, H-4851, Jābir ibn 'Abdullah®); (Abū Dāwūd: B--41, H-4739, Abū Hurayrah®); (Muslim: B- 32, H-6218, Abū Hurayra®); (Bukhārī: B- 3, V- 50, H- 875); (Bukhārī: B- 3, V- 50, H-876).

⁸⁰ *Al-Qur'ān*: 28:77; 10: 26; 3:159. *Ḥadīth*: (Bukhārī: B-1, V- 2, H-10, Abū Mūsa®). (Muslim: B-32, H-6213, Abū Hurayra®, H-6330, 'Urwa b. Zubair®, H-6344).

⁸¹ *Al-Qur'ān*: (9:71). (6:52). (5:2). (3:200). (5:2). *Ḥadīth*: (Bukhārī: B- 3, V- 43, H-626, Abu Musa®). (Bukhārī: B--8, V- 73, H- -40, Nu'mān bin Bashir®). (Bukhārī: B- 3, V- 43, H 624, Anas®). (Muslim: B-32, H-6220-60221, Abū Hurayra®). (Muslim: B-20, H-4565, 'Arfaja®). (Bukhārī: B-3, V- 43, H-623, Anas bin Malik®).

⁸² *Al-Qur'ān*: (42:43). (2:263). (24:22). (2:263).

⁸³ *Al-Qur'ān*: (2:261-262). (2:273-274). (3:92). (13:22-23). (47:38). *Ḥadīth*: (Abū Dawūd: B-41, H- 4772, Abū Salamah®). (Bukhārī: B-3, V- 47, H-763, Asma®, H-764, Asma®). (Bukhārī: B-3, V- 46, Ḥadīth 693, Abū Hurayra®). (Bukhārī: B-3, V- 49, H-870, Abū Hurayra®).

⁸⁴ *Al-Qur'ān*: (53:39). (13:11). *Ḥadīth*: (Bukhārī: B- 4, V- 52, H- 45. Abu Sa'īd al-Khudrī®). (Muslim: B-20, H- 4718. Jābir bin 'Abdullah®, H-4717. Jābir b. Samura®).

⁸⁵ *Al-Qur'ān*: (4:29). (4:58). (4:135). (16:90-91). (57:25). (5:8). (6:153). *Ḥadīth*: (Abū Dāwūd: B-41, H-4855, Ammār®). (Muslim: B-32, H-6249, Ibn 'Umar®).

⁸⁶ *Al-Qur'ān*: (17:26-29). (25:67). *Ḥadīth*: (Abū Dawūd: B- 41, H- 4758, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas®). (Muslim: B-32, H-6214, Abū Hurayra®).

⁸⁷ *Al-Qur'ān*: (6:151).(33:59). *Ḥadīth*: (Abū Dawūd: B- 41, H- 4780. 'Āisha®). (Abū Dawūd: B- 41, H- 4781. Abū Darda').

⁸⁸ *Al-Qur'ān*: (73:10). (46:35). (2:250). (7:128). (8:46). *Ḥadīth*: "The real patience is at the first stroke of a calamity." (Bukhari: B-2, V-23, H-387 & 389. Anas bin Mālik).

⁸⁹ *Al-Qur'ān*: (28:77). *Ḥadīth*: (Bukhārī: B- 8, V- 75 & 76, H- 346, Anas®). (Bukhārī: B- 8, V- 76, H- 453. Abū Hurayra®).

⁹⁰ *Al-Qur'ān*: (49:9). (6:153). *Ḥadīth*: (Bukhārī: B-3, V-49, H857. Umm'ī Kulthūm bint 'Uqba®; B-3, V- 49, H858. Sahl bin Sad®; V- 50, H875 & 876.

⁹¹ *Al-Qur'ān*: (2:257; 9:129; 65:3). *Ḥadīth*: (Muslim: B- 35, Ḥadīth 6472, A'mash).

⁹² *Al-Qur'ān*: 3:77;10:41; 16:90; 17:35; *Ḥadīth*: (Muslim: B- 32, 6219, Abū Hurayra®); (Abū Dāwūd: B- 41,4799, 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb®).

⁹³ *Al-Qur'ān*: 8:60; 9:41; 22:39-40; 22:60; *Ḥadīth*: (Bukhārī: B4, V52, H65. Abū Mūsa®); (Muslim: B20, H4718, Jābir bin 'Abdullah®, H4717. Jābir bin Samura®).

⁹⁴ *Al-Qur'ān*: 6:162; 47:19; *Ḥadīth*: (Abū Dawūd: B- 8, H1474. Nu'mān ibn Bashīr®); (Bukhārī: B-8, V-75, H321. Anas bin Mālik®, B- 8, V-75, H352, Abū Hurayra®).

⁹⁵ *Al-Qur'ān*: 3:77; 5:89;6:152;16:91; 23:8-11; 61:2-3. *Ḥadīth*: Abū Dāwūd: B-41, H-4953, Sufyān ibn Asīd al-Hadramī®; Muslim: B-32, H-6219, Abū Hurayra®.

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Pakistani Feminist Fiction and the Empowerment of Women

By Zia Ahmed

Introduction

Fiction is born out of the society in which it lives and thrives. It continuously influences the living styles of the society. It does not ignore the changes in the society, synchronic or diachronic, rather portrays them in a befitting manner. For this purpose, a fiction writer portrays an ideal world which teaches, delights, and improves upon the existing set of circumstances. As such, he constructs a world of fiction, which, though abstract, is beautiful and attractive. Through this process the fiction writer succeeds in penetrating a message into the very soul of the society. In the portrayal of society, the representation of women emerges as the most significant aspect for the writers of English fiction as a part of feminism.

Feminism is basically a movement that demands equal rights for women. It aims to identify women as creative and equal contributors of values. Some radical feminists, furthermore, think that the writing of women cannot be judged rightly by male critics and hence these women believe in gynocriticism. The feminist movement came further into the limelight because of modern Western writers like Virginia Woolf and Henrik Johan Ibsen. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) were of the first to develop a feminist consciousness. This consciousness was further enhanced by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953), while Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous are other significant women writers who discovered new dimensions in the field of feminism. Based on the images of women represented in Western literature, especially English literature, such new dimensions of feminism were considered Western. But new dimensions of feminism continue to spread because, under the influence of colonialism, literatures in English are being produced all around the world. This trend is visible in Pakistani writers who demonstrate a feminist approach in their works.

The portrayals of women by Pakistani fiction writers should also be seen in the context of postcolonial feminism. Pakistani fiction may be a part of postcolonial fiction, which is fiction produced mostly in the former British colonies (India, Australia, and major parts of Africa and Asia have been British colonies). As Bill Ashcroft suggests in *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), the literatures produced in

these areas are mostly a reaction against the negative portrayals of the local culture by the colonizers. About the role of postcolonial literature with respect to feminism, Ashcroft writes

Literature offers one of the most important ways in which these new perceptions are expressed and it is in their writings and though other arts such as painting, sculpture, music, and dance that the day today realities experienced by the colonized peoples have been most powerfully encoded and so profoundly influential. (1)

Likewise, postcolonial writers explore themes of struggles for independence, culture, and displacement and feminism in their local settings. The use of these themes in the writings of postcolonial writers was not accidental but a deliberate phenomenon (Ashcroft 2002). The issue of feminism in fiction, as a part of post colonialism, is significant and particular in this context. Postcolonial fiction mostly portrays the injustice, oppression, and the exploitation by the colonizers. It extends and portrays that the lives of women were doubly affected by the process of colonizing. Before British colonialism, for example, life of Indian Muslim women was segregated and limited to the small world in which they lived and died, usually without making any significant mark in the society. Azra (2000) points out,

They were prevented from taking any part in the corporate life of the college concerned. They sat apart in the classroom, hardly mixed with their fellow men students, and had no opportunity to participate in the activities like the gymkhana or the debating society. In short, they formed a small world of their own. (47)

The impact of British imperialism caused even more changes at almost all the social levels which influenced the women as well. Women started to realize that they were kept deliberately out of the main flow of life by being denied many rights. This realization was because of the gradual spread of modern education among Muslim women in India. This led slowly but surely to the opening of public spaces for women. The degree of this change among Muslim women was not as considerable as it was in the case of their Hindu sisters (Azra 2000). But, nonetheless, the change resulted in social and domestic conflicts for women of this area. Their demand of equal rights and individualism gave birth to feminism which was further enhanced because of female participation in freedom movements in India. This is the very reason that Third World Feminism is often related to postcolonial feminism, as Young (2005) has also pointed out: "In the post colonial state, post colonial feminism begins from the perception that its politics are framed by the active legacies of Colonialism" (109).

Therefore, the voice of feminism is more audible in postcolonial fiction, including Pakistani fiction, than anywhere else. The writers of postcolonial fiction

have tried to portray women and women's issues in many such situations as said above. Third World women tend to be depicted as victims of male control and of traditional cultures. According to Mohanty (1991), Third World women, like Western women, are produced as subjects in historically and culturally specific ways by the societies in which they live and act as agents. In this context, one dominant aspect of the postcolonial Pakistani fiction is that it portrays both happy and unhappy images of women in Pakistan and hence tries to portray the role models through which the unhappy women can make their lives better. Young (2005) also supports this point of view when he says,

Postcolonial feminism is certainly concerned to analyze the nervous conditions of being a woman in a post colonial environment, whether in the social oppression of the post colony or the metropolis. Its concern is not in the first place with individual problems but with those that affect the whole communities. (115)

Pakistani fiction is the continuation and extension of the fiction produced under the colonial rulers in India. As such it has inherited all the pros and cons of the fiction in India before the end of the colonial rule in Indo-Pak. Feminism has been one part of this larger body of literature. All this makes Pakistani fiction a part of postcolonial fiction. Pakistani writers have portrayed the lives of Pakistani women under the imposing role of religious, social, and economic parameters. These roles are partly traditional and partly modern day realities women face. Women in Pakistani fiction have been shown constantly developing and changing. They are portrayed mostly as round characters, which are initially bound and restrained by the chain of customs and tradition. They are depicted also as possessed by the demons of the social taboos which are man-made and used to control the lives of the women. Writers show that women find themselves on the many horned dilemma while going through such circumstances. They were colonized and declared to be the 'others' and silent majority (subalterns). This subaltern status also dates back to the past traditions of this subcontinent. The Muslim and Hindu religion further contributed in making these taboos even stronger. The postcolonial men re-colonized the bodies and minds of their women as a reaction and in an effort to preserve their cultural values. Women, as in the past, were supposed to carry the burden of cultural values as an offshoot of post colonialism. But the same has brought also modern day realities to the forefront along with a new consciousness for women. This ignited the process of mental freedom though the bodies were still colonized by men. Pakistani writers emphasize this factor in their fiction through the portrayals of women characters. These women characters evolve gradually through a process of psychological development from a suffering, weeping, and subaltern woman to a confident and independent woman. The writers use various channels of women's

life in order to portray these changes in the images of women. Herein, an exploration of the same will be made and the changing models of women in Pakistani fiction will be analyzed.

In the Pakistani context, this awareness dates back to the establishment of educational foundation by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. It was further strengthened because of the independence movement for Pakistan in which women were called upon to play a very significant role. As the pioneer of women rights, Mohammad Ali Jinnah demanded an equal participation of women in all spheres of life. These initial role models of women continued their struggle for women's rights after the independence, as well, and in 1948 were able to achieve women's rights to property in Pakistan. Even before partition, this Pakistani women's movement was portrayed by Mumtaz Shahnwaz in her novel, *The Heart Divided* (1990), which can be called the starting point for Pakistani feminist writings in English.

But this spirit of independence died down very soon and women were again confined within the four walls of their homes and they were deprived of the hard-earned status. This resulted in the establishment of resistance groups like Women Action Forum, which resisted passage of anti-women laws. Discrimination against women, however, continued to find its place in literature. Literature created by Pakistani writers was never unconscious of this need.¹

The life and suffering of and the discrimination against women have found place in the pages of English fiction in Pakistan and this has been helpful in developing a Pakistani feminist fiction. It also removes the doubts of certain Western critics who say that there is no feminist debate in Pakistani fiction. The feminist movement is developing and working constantly under its own circumstances. Moreover, it has taken ground also because of the postcolonial aspect of Pakistani literature in English. This postcolonial feminism can be very easily traced in the form of images of women created by the Pakistani fiction writers in English.

Portrayals of Women in Pakistani Fiction

Writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohsin Hamid, Zulifkar Ghose, Talat Abbasi, and Qaisra Shahraz are significant because of the portrayals of women in their fiction. Sidhwa's *The Bride* (2006) portrays a four-year-old girl who matures into a woman. She grows up under the control of a man from Kohistan, namely Qasim who found her when he was returning from Amritsar to Lahore by a train after the establishment of Pakistan. The train was attacked by the Sikhs and the girl, whose name originally was Munni but later named Zaitoon by Qasim, lost her parents. Qasim brings the girl to Lahore where she becomes young under the loving and caring affection of both Qasim khan and Zohra, a neighbor and wife of Nikka Pehlwan² at Lahore. Qasim treats Zaitoon with a fatherly affection and love but when she grows

up, he marries her to one of his relatives living in the mountains of Pakistan. The girl is never consulted about the biggest decision of her life and also the requests of Zohra and Nikka not to marry her so far away are turned down under the plea of the word given to his clan's men. Zaitoon was supposed to adopt a culture that was not only unknown to her but also much different from the one in which she was brought up so affectionately. After her marriage, she could not reconcile with the brutal nature of her husband. She was beaten harshly, given undesirable food, and made to work hard. She raised her voice and was mercilessly beaten. She escaped from the village and spent at least fifteen days in the mountains trying to reach the safest bridge constructed by the Pakistan army but only after going hungry and being raped. Luckily, she escapes all this and is ultimately rescued by the army.

The account of Sidhwa's fiction regarding feminism is never complete unless we refer to the feminism portrayed in the novel *The Ice-Candy Man* (1988). This novel particularly portrays the impact of partition on the lives and bodies of women. The writer portrays the double impact of British colonialism through the character of Ayah (Shanta). Women's bodies were twice colonized, first by the British and then by the men in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, as suggested by Sara Suleri (1989). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also claims that women in the subcontinent were simply a silent majority whom she termed as subalterns. According to her, this aspect of women in India had become even stronger because of the impact of colonialism (Morton 2000). Pre-partition-Shanta is the object of attraction for many Muslim and non-Muslim men, especially Masseur. But post-partition-Shanta is only a ravaged and molested woman who has nothing to fall back upon other than selling her body as a dancing woman. None of her lovers could save her from becoming so. Shanta is not one woman but a representative of thousands of Hindu, Muslim and other minority women who were raped, killed, and cut to pieces because of the aftermaths of British imperialism. But with her courage and determination she survives and ultimately reaches her family in Amritsar. In her novel, *An American Brat* (1994), Sidhwa shows very clearly that the women who are born and live in Pakistan under social and religious restrictions can thrive only in the world which allows them full utilization of their talent. She portrays the character of Ferouza in the novel *An American Brat* (1994). Ferouza, born and bred in Pakistan, was able to harness her talent fully only when she lived in the United States of America, so much so that she was able to question the validity of the religious norms of marriage in her Parsee community.

The novel *Murder of Aziz Khan* (1998) by Zulifkar Ghose portrays feminism with a different perspective. Among the most significant women characters is Razia, the wife of the eldest of the Shah brothers, Ayub. Razia is the mother of the two girls but not satisfied with her life even when she is the wife of a rich business-

man and landlord. In the deep recesses of her heart there is restlessness, and she has been nurturing the traditional trivialities of the woman as a human being so much that she wants to let down her other women-fellows at her home. She feels pride for having daughters, especially because Faridha, the wife of the second shah brothers, does not have any children due to the reasons of her husband, Akram. But she also feels that she does not have a son who could inherit all the property; she expects that something may happen in future. However, she suffers from another weakness, which is the frailty of woman. This is her strange passion for her brother-in-law, Afaq, the third of the shah brothers. To satisfy herself about this passion she travels to London, under the impression that she will arrange for her girls' education, and meets Afaq. But she is clever enough to get rid of the consequences of her meeting with him. Afaq stands segregated from the rest of the family because of her manipulations. Social taboos are basically responsible for this type of behaviour of Razia.

Another woman in this family is a special victim of circumstances as well as man's follies. Zarina has a miserable life because of her father's concealment that she is the illegitimate daughter of Akram; yet, he never acknowledges this publicly, and instead she is made to believe that she is a cousin of the family. She harbors a feeling of love for Afaq who in reality is her uncle but she is ignorant of this reality. The marriage can't take place, as she is the daughter of Akram. Although she belongs to a rich family, she cannot enjoy her life according to her own wishes, circumstances resulting from Akram's irresponsible attitude. Zarina is also the victim of men's wrongdoings. But it is she who has to suffer the pangs of failure in love.

Even in recent times, the trends of treating women inhumanly are available in Pakistani fiction in English. One example is Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* (2002), which shows similar trends pertaining to women and feminism in Pakistan. Zarri Bano and her mother Shahzada are among the chief characters. Zarri Bano is forced by her father to become a 'holy woman'³ to protect the land and honor of the family. Zarri Bano sacrifices all she had in her life including her love and freedom. She becomes a 'holy woman' to challenge this custom and fulfills its requirements but ultimately wins in defeating the myth of the custom. Not only Zarri Bano but also Firdous, Kaneez, and Shahzada undergo similar kinds of circumstances. This is Shahraz' particular way: to show common women how they can learn from the lives of rich women and change their lives for the better.

Mohsin Hamid goes still further in his novel, *The Moth Smoke* (2000), and provides tiny glimpses out of the life of Mumtaz,⁴ an urban woman who suffers from the neglect of her husband. But Mumtaz learns to survive by finding creative work. She meets many people and chronicles the lives of prostitutes. The writer tries to send the message that if such women find suitable and creative work, they can live their lives well. Mumtaz is the wife of a rich business man Aurangzeb,

who is himself a son of a wealthy army man turned business man. Mumtaz is a foreign qualified woman and enjoys the freedom of speech, friendship, roaming, parties, late night functions, and works also as a journalist clandestinely under the pen name of Manto. The major cause of the Mumtaz's life style cannot be anything other than the dissatisfaction and neglect of her husband in her domestic life. The writer seems to imply that many women from the upper strata of Pakistan suffer from solitariness even after enjoying maximum possible rights and the power to exercise such rights.

Nadeem Aslam tells the story of many women including Koukab and Surraya in *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004). Koukab tries desperately to maintain her Islamic piety as she struggles to come to terms with a double murder and its corrosive effect on her family. Koukab is very religious-minded and is the daughter of a mosque leader. However, the worst fate is that of Surraya who has been divorced by her husband and is now seeking a proper man in order to re-marry and get a re-divorce in order to fulfill her legal obligations to Islamic law. Surraya suffers mental and physical abuse because of social taboos and her husband's irresponsible attitude. She has to leave her home and her son and sleep with another man to fulfill the conditions for re-joining her family in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the short stories in *Cactus Town and Other Short Stories* (2002) by Aamir Hussein portray the oppressive social and political conditions in which Pakistani women live and move. For example, in the story "The Needle Woman's Calendar", we find the portrayal of Tabinda who married Sohayl but had to suffer because of the wrongdoings of Sohayl. Tabinda was left alone after her husband went abroad and was even more shocked when he returned with his English bride. She could not digest it all. She decided to quit and survive on her own. As soon as she reached Karachi, she removed the veil and left it on the seat of the train. Only after this did she gain confidence and remove her sufferings. This made her powerful and she was able to utter the most powerful sentence: that she wanted to divorce Sohayl.

Feminism in Pakistani Fiction

As indicated above, Pakistani fiction writers have been portraying the ever-changing status of women in their society. These writers have portrayed poor women as well as rich women, educated as well as uneducated women, old women as well as young women. Through all these aspects, the writers have indicated and enunciated the psychologies of Pakistani women and the underlying factors working at the background. They have done so because these aspects play a major role in determining the social and political role of women in society. Here I analyze some of the portrayals of women given above.

In *The Moth Smoke* (2000), Mumtaz feels neglected by her husband and becomes disturbed; but very soon, with the help of a friend, she finds a pastime. Like any other educated and rich lady, Mumtaz feels that her life is restricted after her marriage. Her husband Ozi remains absorbed in his own world and pays very little attention to her. This creates a sense of loss in Mumtaz, and she is even more confused about the purpose of her life. The parties and functions held in and around her house do not comfort her because she is totally upset. She needs time, love, devotion, and attention from her husband which she finds drastically lacking. She was brought up to become a successful working woman and not to sit at home to be a babysitter. Her mind, therefore, is constantly working to find a way out of her aimless life, and she discovers a way of writing about the hidden lives of women in Pakistan. She visits the red-light area to interview an old and mature prostitute and collects a lot of material about her life and the way she came to that unaccepted mode of life. Mumtaz also gets an article published about the life of prostitutes.

The cause of much awkwardness in the social and sexual behavior of Mumtaz cannot be other than the dissatisfaction because of the neglect of her husband. If such a woman is given opportunity to independently exercise her mental faculties, while getting attention from males, she can be the best and most-benefiting individual for society. Hamid (2000) portrays in Mumtaz a woman who will not die after getting mad with her situation at home, rather she comes out and finds out happiness and satisfaction for herself through her work. Mumtaz is no more in a mood to bear the life pattern developed for her by her husband; rather she tries to make her life as happy as she deems fit.

Mental dissatisfaction is the cause of suffering for not only the rich and opulent women like Mumtaz but also for the women belonging to the poor segment of the society, though the factors responsible for this may be different. One of the basic reasons for the sufferings of women in this segment is the concept of honor for men. In order to preserve his honor and ego, a man will use women, and hence he becomes the biggest source of psychological upheaval for women. Sidhwa has highlighted one such idea in her novel *The Bride* (2006). Sidhwa provides a contrast at all levels between the lives of women in Punjab and those of the segregated fringes of the Indus River. The main idea behind this contrast is the warmth of feelings and emotions, which is replaced by jealousy and the harsh and uncontrollable anger against women in the north of Pakistan. Zaitoon, initially named Munni, was forced to marry an unknown hill man who had a different set of circumstances and could not adjust with Zaitoon's ways of living. The character portrayal of Zaitoon reflects two basic phases of her life: one in which she grows up under the loving people around her and a second in which she escapes from her bitter tribal possessors. The writer shows that the innocent girl from Punjab, who was ready and

willing to live a poor but satisfied life so long as she was treated with love, could not maintain her submissive posture in the face of customs and traditions of the tribal area. She decided to rebel and found courage to break the shackles of time and place. She became successful in doing so but at a price. This young woman is a model for women suffering because of the tyranny of tradition and custom. Zaitoon achieves the life of a free woman. But all this happened only after a long struggle and mental fearfulness.

A similar development takes place in Shanta in the *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), though the mode of emancipation was entirely different. Shanta had to pass through a great ordeal of losing a secure environment of the house of Lenny to find herself in the house of dancing girls. Shanta is a woman who is attractive, loving, caring and has a welcoming attitude towards all human beings. She welcomes everyone for comfort and peace like mother earth. But as usual, mother earth is deceived, battered, and divided because of brutal human action. Shanta loses trust even in her long standing lover because this same lover has found a way to sell her body, which is already bruised and battered. This changes Shanta and she turns from an innocent and loving girl into a mature woman who must seek a new identity. She openly refutes the love and care of her husband's affected love and asks her god-mother to help her reach her family in India. She would prefer her family and their care instead of giving love and care to a man who had brought her to a place where bodies of women are sold. Only after long suffering and coming to an understanding about the world around her could she make this choice and change.

The feudal women portrayed in Ghose's *Murder of Aziz Khan* (1998) are typical in nature and suffer from common affronts to female social psychologies. Razia and Farieda have an advantage over many: they are materially well off. But being wealthy does not release them from the grip of men who have total control over the economy and social being of their domestic lives. They are neither free nor independent from surrounding males and, in a way, they have no significant role to play other than to stay at home and take care of their families. So here the notion that the women of wealth enjoy more freedom and have a big say in their lives is falsified in a feudal set up.

Razia undergoes a very different type of psychological experiment and training. She does not develop economically but socially after her psychological training and is able to shed away many of her traditional womanly ghosts and prejudices. She had felt a passion for her brother-in-law, but this was out of jealousy and for the satisfaction of her sense of superiority. She wanted to defeat a young woman by proving that she could win the love of a young man even when she was the mother of two girls. But her experience in London taught her that men could not be sincere to any single woman. The mental corruption that she suffered

was also found in Afaq. Therefore, she becomes a better human being and has a more responsible share of her life with her family and not with Afaq. Razia also wins freedom and emancipation, not from the taboos and shackles of the Pakistani socio-political system but from her mental agonies and sufferings. Ghose also, like Hamid, traces out the desire and sentiments of women and then gradually proceeds to fulfillment and ultimately proves that the path adopted by Razia was not right. But her path was necessary because without such experiences she could never have understood Afaq and so could not have emptied him out of her. She goes back to her family and husband in a more positively agreeable way.

As mentioned earlier, in the case of Tabinda, the veil was the cover that had smashed her personality and made her stand behind her husband as a non-entity. But when her husband had separated from her, she removed her veil. This removal also indicates that she had to remove her shyness and over-protection from society, one that makes women feel helpless and dependent. She removes this cover and enters into a world of economic activity where, although a bit difficult in the beginning, became fruitful and she could live as successfully as possible. As someone who is abused, humiliated, and insulted by her husband, Tabinda becomes a role model by finding courage to overcome this humiliation to face the world: she actively changes her life for the better. The writer suggests that instead of suffering silently, women will attempt to make their own lives after quitting relationships which are unkind to them.

In the novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Surraya is faultless. It is her husband who drank wine and divorced her. He forced her to enter into another relationship in order to re-enter her own life and family. In her efforts to do so, she finds herself in an intimate relationship with Shamus, having sex with him even before making any arrangements for marriage. She tries to maintain her sanctity as a devout Muslim women but she needs the services of another Muslim male who should marry her and then divorce her as she wished. Surraya wants at every cost to marry Shamus and get a divorce in order to rejoin her separated family. But to her horror, she finds that Shamus does not want to marry her, and even if he did so he would not divorce her. With the passage of time, she feels guilty that her activities in England were wrong and again wonders what would happen if her boy began to hate her for spending so much time away from him. Surraya, who had wanted to make a large sacrifice in order to live with her family, learns in the end that all had led her to chaos and her path to set the things right was ultimately wrong. Therefore, she feels lost and divided between her desire and duty. She leaves everything blank because life got beyond her control and she drops all her plans to return to her family.

The above discussed images are of women who will not remain passive and will not continue to bear male-oppressive environments. These women seek to emancipate themselves through education, struggle, and hard work. Pakistani fiction writers portray the ever-changing status of women in their societies, images that demonstrate women as successful and yet as suffering. The women who are successful in acquiring a good status in Pakistani society may become role models for other women who are less fortunate in this matter. The fiction writer lights up the path for the miserable women by making his or her characters undergo a psychological development. This may go a long way to strengthen and improve the women's confidence in dealing with the day-to-day matters of their lives.

Conclusion

Pakistani fiction writers like Talat Abbasi, Qaisra Shahraz, Mohsin Hamid, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Zulifkar Ghose have made concerted efforts to bring to light the status of Pakistani woman. Their female portrayals are reflective of the psychological and behavioral changes women undergo to achieve the status of emancipation and empowerment. Women may suffer but they emerge to compete with society, and the whole process renders them more successful women. Women achieve maturity gradually in Pakistani fiction by rebelling against those factors which created such suffering. Faced with cultural constraints and linguistic barriers, the women of Pakistani fiction still engage in a constant struggle of becoming independent. Furthermore, Pakistani fiction writers have not concentrated on just one factor of women's lives; rather they have taken women from every section of society and have shown particular sufferings and problems. At times, upper-class women are the role models and yet other times they may suffer from many social and psychological issues. Nonetheless, rich or otherwise, most still suffer from many social taboos and political problems.

In order to highlight the sufferings and the struggles of women, these writers make their female characters undergo a difficult set of circumstances to train them in the art of life. These circumstances make these women better, by better understanding their responsibilities to society and, also importantly, their responsibility to themselves. They learn the art of living and hence liberate themselves from the unnecessary restrictions posed on them by traditional social systems. These Pakistani fiction writers have become a resource to guide other Pakistani feminist movements, much like that which has passed in Western fiction and criticism. Feminist voices were first raised in Western fiction, which later on paved the way for emancipation and empowerment of women in general. The Pakistani fiction writers have also set a base and pace for feminism in this region of the world and hopefully

it will succeed: although yet minimal, there are visible signs that Pakistani fiction is contributing to this greater cause of women in Pakistan.

Notes:

¹ Urdu literature even before partition was voicing its concern about the rights of women. The names of Deputy Nazir Ahmed, Malaya Chanda Bai, Bilquis Jamal, Rabia, Kaneez Fatima and Safia Shamim are worth mentioning in this regard. In recent times, Ada Jafri, Fehmida Riaz, and Kishwar Naheed are the main players in the modern Urdu literature in this regard. The tradition of Urdu Literature has been carried into English literature produced in this area.

² Nikka happens to be a sturdy wrestler and business partner of Qasim Khan.

³ A 'holy woman' is one who is married to the Holy Qura'an and is supposed to devote her life to the religious teachings and learning. This practice has been active in many areas of Sindh, Pakistan.

⁴ Also called Taji with affection.

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Muneeza Shamsie's *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*

Reviewed by David Waterman

And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women. Edited with an Introduction by Muneeza Shamsie. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2008. 386 pages. ISBN: 978-1-55861-580-9.

The first of its kind, *And the World Changed* is a collection of twenty-five creative texts originally written in English by Pakistani women, some living in Pakistan, some abroad. This anthology developed, Muneeza Shamsie tells us, from two previous works, *A Dragonfly in the Sun: An Anthology of Pakistani Writing in English* (Oxford University Press, 1997) and *Leaving Home: Toward a New Millennium; A Collection of English Prose by Pakistani Writers* (Oxford University Press, 2001). Arranged chronologically by year of the author's birth, this collection effectively spans two generations of Pakistani women, lesser-known writers finding a well-deserved place alongside more established writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Sara Suleri Goodyear, Uzma Aslam Khan and Kamila Shamsie. The texts in this volume are unified by their elaboration in English, itself the result of the authors' education both in Pakistan and in a country in the West, thus creating what the editor calls "multilayered [. . .] stories of reclamation, a charting of territory across two worlds" (15), stories which retain a social / political imperative, some openly, some in more discreet literary style.

Muneeza Shamsie's introduction provides the reader with a helpful context, briefly reviewing Pakistan's history – before and after Partition – while supplying benchmarks regarding the evolution of women's experience and writing during this period. Special mention, for example, is made of the first South Asian English novel of Partition, *The Heart Divided* (Mumtaz Shahnawaz, 1959), Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah's memoir, *From Purdah to Parliament* (1963), or Bapsi Sidhwa's first novel, *The Crow Eaters* (1978), which marks, according to the editor, the beginning of contemporary English writing by Pakistani women.

The stories themselves, as one would expect, very often deal with the trauma of Partition. "Defend Yourself Against Me" is Bapsi Sidhwa's tale of expatriates in Texas, still haunted by the atrocities committed by Muslims, Hindus and

Sikhs during Partition, and the necessity of forgiveness if one is to continue living. Roshni Rustomji also takes a long view, the mass migrations of peoples following Partition and the lingering effects through sixty years of contemporary history, culminating in Benazir Bhutto's assassination in 2007. Minority communities are often the subject of these stories, such as Dina Lal of Sorayya Khan's "Staying," who refuses to leave Lahore even as it is in flames, going so far as to buy the mansion of the wealthy railway chief, an Englishman who has of course fled, a state of denial which is a futile attempt to turn back history. Muneeza Shamsie's own "Jungle Jim" throws the colonial subject into a no-man's-land of identity, those colonial subjects who do not genuinely belong either in London or in the colony: "What are we?" I asked her. 'We are British,' she said. But whenever I said this to people, the British looked blank and Indians and Pakistanis laughed" (98).

The ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan finds expression in Sabyn Javeri-Jillani's "And then the World Changed," describing peaceful life in open-minded Karachi, a feeling of tolerance and goodwill which disintegrates after the 1965 war with India, news of which reaches the residents by way of the radio in Bobby Uncle's car. Sehba Sarwar's "Soot" follows Zahra from Karachi to Kolkata, by way of graduate school in Chicago, as she completes her internship; her diverse friendships along the way help give a new perspective to her priorities, especially vital poverty relief, going well beyond the superficial political and ideological differences which no longer seem so important. The clash of cultures comes to the fore in "Meeting the Sphinx," Rukhsana Ahmad's portrait of a British academic struggling to come to terms with new points of view, imported, perhaps not so ironically, from Britain's own former colonies. Ahmad allows for optimism, however, as the embattled university professor swallows his pride in order to put an end to the students' hunger strike, giving ground in order to save human lives, a gesture which earns him the admiration of his Asian colleague. Superstition is explored by Tahira Naqvi, whose protagonist, fearing for her husband's safety and influenced by her dreams, makes a vow to God that her husband shall marry their servant girl, Jeena, a practice hardly in step with their contemporary situation, and refused by her husband. Islamic folklore is captured in Shahrukh Husain's "Rubies for a Dog," and is important not so much for the details of this particular fairy tale, in this case a daughter who makes a long, perilous journey to salvage her father's reputation, but rather as an indication of modern Pakistani culture, informed by a multitude of influences and traditions, both East and West.

Sexual politics and arranged marriages do not escape critical treatment either. In "The Optimist," Bina Shah's protagonist announces to her husband, just after their marriage decree has been signed, that she can't stand the sight of him; she has agreed to the marriage only because of family pressure, while conversely

the parents of the bride in Qaisra Shahraz's "A Pair of Jeans" call off their son's planned marriage after seeing the girl dressed like a decadent Westerner. In "Run-away Truck Ramp" Soniah Kamal charts the journey made across the USA by an American woman and Pakistani man, and their difficulties finding common ground in terms of conflicting sexual norms and customs; while they separate after only a few days, the impact of this journey remains: "These are the one-night stands that determine the future of the rest of our nights" (298).

Universal experience / unity-in-diversity are highlighted by Fawzia Afzal Khan and Maniza Naqvi, while the tale of a mother and her handicapped daughter in "Mirage," by Talat Abbasi, is disturbing for all readers, regardless of their particular cultural origins. Two of the stories in this collection deal with the recent conflicts surrounding the rise of the Taliban and al-Qaeda: Humera Afridi's "The Price of Hubris," set in New York just after 9/11, and the sudden vulnerability felt by the Pakistani protagonist (a situation reminiscent of Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*), and Bushra Rehman's "The Old Italian," set in a contemporary immigrant neighborhood in Queens. The editor has also included a student work, "Clay Fissures" by Nayyara Rahman, one of the winners of the 2004 British Council initiative, "I Belong International Story Chain."

And the World Changed comes at a good time, when the current geopolitical situation places Pakistan very high on the list of the world's most dangerous places. Through all of these representations of the trauma of colonialism and Partition, Indo-Pakistani relations, gender conflict and cultural clash are portrayed human beings, individuals certainly, but more important, human beings as members of humanity, each related to one another, linked by the same dreams and the same worries which the women writers of this anthology address with such clear vision. We look forward to more first-rate inspiration from the forthcoming *Oxford Companion to the Literatures of Pakistan*, also edited by Muneeza Shamsie.

Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*

Reviewed by Eileen Geoffroy

Burnt Shadows. Kamila Shamsie. London, Berlin and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009. 363 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4088-0427-8.

“Everything can disappear in a flash of light” could be used as a sub-title for this novel – Kamila Shamsie’s fifth – which takes us through the atom bomb on Nagasaki, the Partition of India and Pakistan up to 9/11, Afghanistan and beyond. “How did it come to this” is asked in the prologue. Indeed, how did it? **Nagasaki, August 9th 1945**. Hiroko Taraka, “the traitress,” used to be an interpreter and now works in a munitions factory even though by this time there is no work because there is no steel. Hiroko is a double traitor as her father dared to criticize the military and even the Emperor himself, and her fiancé is a German, Konrad Weiss. If the military police discovered his “birds” – purple covered notebooks about the paranoia in imperial Japan hidden in the trees in his garden – he would be sent to prison. Here we see the beginning of cross-cultural problems, or should we say racism, that are explored throughout the novel. Konrad has been ordered out of his sister’s home in India as his brother-in-law is English. He refers to his wife Ilsa as Elizabeth. The next rejection is by his Japanese neighbors. And then it happens. Hiroko has just put on her dead mother’s silk kimono, “white, with three black cranes swooping across her back.” Konrad is on his way to the cathedral. Both are thinking about their marriage “when the war is over.” “The world goes white” and brings darkness. Hiroko’s father has turned into a reptile from hell. All that remains of Konrad is a long shadow.

Delhi / Dilli, 1947, a stroke city like Derry / Londonderry. Delhi is the Raj / Dilli is the people. The Raj is going but what about the people? More strokes: Hindus and Pakistanis. Sajjad Ali Ashraf and James Burton. Elizabeth Burton / Ilsa Weiss. James’s “munitions factory” is the legal work he’s doing for the empire; his employee Sajjad dreams of becoming a lawyer. Konrad had “discovered” Sajjad and they were all about to discover Hiroko. The strokes continue. The spider’s web expands. Elizabeth and James quarrel continually. Elizabeth dislikes Sajjad

but defends Hiroko. James appreciates but mistrusts Hiroko, who has moved in and started to learn Urdu with Saj.

The Three Birds. The charcoal-colored birds on Hiroko's back, the birds that had flown in to land there on the 9th of August. There are, however, other birds, migratory this time. There is growing unrest in India: the English speak about *going* home, the Pakistanis about *leaving* home. Henry, Elizabeth and James's son, wants to *come* home to India from boarding school in England, sent there when Elizabeth realized that her son felt Indian, her son who preferred Sajjad's company to hers, just as Hiroko seems to do. Hiroko is thinking about going *back* to Japan, as marriage to the traditionally-minded Sajjad seems impossible until he breaks free from his cage when he touches the charcoal birds, the ones that hold no feeling for Hiroko but arouse passion in Sajjad when he is forced by Hiroko to touch those broken wings. After his mother's death he feels he can break with the old traditions so they marry and go to Turkey on honeymoon, but also to escape the riots and carnage which have overtaken Dilli / Delhi. His dream of returning to a new life in New Delhi is shattered when he is refused a visa to New India. Meanwhile Elizabeth is returning to her roots: she will become Ilse again, living a new life in a new city – New York.

Pakistan, 1982-83. A new character has appeared to join Hiroko and Sajjad in their new country – their son Raza. By now he is sixteen, a gifted linguist and excellent cricketer, slightly ashamed of his non-Pakistani mother. Raza is a brilliant student and has just one more exam to take before getting his Matric and going to college to become a lawyer. A new country, Kamila Shamsie's, is shown to us. The sights and sounds and smells of Karachi, but where the young people want to force Pakistan to become a Muslim state.

Harry (Henry) Burton has returned to the Indian subcontinent where he contacts his old friend, Sajjad. Raza hero-worships him, especially when Harry helps him overcome his test anxiety which caused him to fail his Islamic studies again. Unfortunately there is a misunderstanding: Harry says he can help Raza with the administrative papers needed to get into an American university, whereas Raza understands that he will get him *into* a university. The Ashrafs again feel betrayed by a Burton. In the immediate aftermath Raza Ashraf becomes, in his mind, Raza Hazara, an Afghan freedom fighter, spending more and more of his time with Abdullah, a young gun-runner for the Mujahideen. Just when Raza Ashraf decides to become a lawyer, having brilliantly succeeded in passing the hated exam, Raza Hazara decides to bow out by going to a training camp in Afghanistan.

The shadows lengthen, the hated birds return. Raza is ordered to leave the camp as he is thought by the ISI to be a CIA informer, but before he gets home his father is murdered. Hiroko goes to live with Ilsa in New York just after 9/11 and

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cannot understand the outpouring of grief. For her, the attacks on the Twin Towers are nothing compared to Nagasaki, where the Americans “created a desolation and called it peace” which is what they are doing in Afghanistan where Harry is now working with Raza for the CIA. Abdullah is on Raza’s mind and he manages to get news of his old friend, who is working illegally as a taxi-driver in New York but wants to get back to Afghanistan as the FBI is looking for him. He contacts Kim Burton, whom he has never met, and asks for help. Suddenly the Weiss-Burtons and Tanaka-Ashrafs web is torn to shreds. Blood and shadows are everywhere. We began with Nagasaki, our final view of the East is Kandehar. Hiroko’s birds become burkas. Death and flight, which have followed us throughout the novel, conclude it. Will the spider return and provide a safe haven or has the final flash of light proved too powerful?

In this story of death and destruction, love and hope, Kamila Shamsie manages to open up our senses. We see, hear, smell and touch as we move from one city to another, one continent to another but at the end we are left with that most poignant of expressions: “if only.” A truly haunting novel.

Notes for *Pakistaniaat* about *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*

By David Waterman

Readers of *Pakistaniaat* may be interested in the journal *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, appearing twice each year as the official publication of the Society for the Study of Commonwealth Countries / Société d'Etude des Pays du Commonwealth, based at the Université Paris III / La Sorbonne Nouvelle, <http://www.univ-paris3.fr/commonwealth/>

While of general interest, the current issue (Volume 31, number 2, Spring 2009), largely consecrated to Anita Desai, also has two items sure to appeal to a Pakistan-specific audience, the first an article by Muneeza Shamsie, entitled “Covert Operations in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction,” and secondly a review of *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, edited by Muneeza Shamsie, by French researcher Laetitia Zecchini.

The abstract for “Covert Operations” reads as follows: This paper explores the American-Pakistan-Afghanistan encounter portrayed in three recently published incisive Pakistani novels: *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by Mohammed Hanif, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Moshin Hamid, and *The Wasted Vigil* by Nadeem Aslam. Together they mirror the region’s history across thirty years and challenge the polarization of nations (15).

Exploding Mangoes (2008) tells of Zia’s last ten days in power, before the mysterious air crash which killed him, the American Ambassador Arnold Raphael, and many Pakistani generals. Nearly everyone seems to have had a possible motive for the assassination, carried out by a bomb concealed in, as the title suggests, a case of mangoes. As it turns out, other conspiracies to kill Zia were brewing, including a saber attack during parade, although the most serious plots are, as usual, credited to the CIA and ISI. The CIA’s so-called war against the evil empire of communism resurfaces in *Wasted Vigil* (2008) as well, through the representation of ruthless agents and American complicity with dictators, and in *Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) an American agent has come to Lahore to track down, and probably kill, Changez, in retaliation for his subversive activities. While the paper does wander occasionally from its “covert operations” thesis, there remains plenty of information and insight to be gleaned as concerns three of the best current Pakistani

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novels and the historical matters they take as their subject. Shamsie rightly arrives at the conclusion that Aslam, Hanif and Hamid “reveal a new generation of writers which does not flinch from revealing unpleasant truths [and] engage with some of the most pertinent issues of today” (24).

This same unflinching regard for contemporary history is also the subject of the women writers who are collected in the anthology, *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, edited by Muneeza Shamsie, and reviewed for *Commonwealth* by Laetitia Zecchini of France’s CNRS, the national scientific research center. The review is largely positive, as it should be (see the review of *And the World Changed* in the current issue of *Pakistaniaat*), although I must disagree with one point made by Dr. Zecchini when she asserts: “The most successful texts are indeed those which do not try to make a political point, whether feminist, progressive, or “post-colonial,” but instead resist the temptation of *translating* Pakistani reality for a Western audience” (155). There is indeed a dominant notion in France of what literature “should” be and where it should remain, a notion which often isolates literary representation from larger domains such as Cultural Studies, an approach which encourages readers to look beyond the text. Personally, I’m more than willing to accept, on equal footing, a text which is less literary in favor of a text with a political imperative or a journalistic argument, but this is, of course, a reflection of my training in the US. This minor disagreement aside, many thanks to Laetitia Zecchini for an excellent review.

Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan, an exhibition at the Asia Society Museum, New York, through January 3, 2010

By Louis Werner

The War on Terror has been a great teacher for Americans who previously knew nothing of Pakistan. Now television pundits can spout the acronyms FATA, NWFP, and ISI as if everyone at home follows right along. Baseball-loving national security experts who once called Babe Ruth the Sultan of Swat now know, after reading Fredrik Barth's anthropological study, that the *sultan* of Swat was in fact a *wali*, the last one named Miangul Jahanzeb. And never again will anyone say that Sindbad sailed from Sindh. Now we know that Gwadar in Balochistan is its country's best port.

But an even better teacher about Pakistan today than war is art. The first exhibition of contemporary Pakistani art ever to come to America is soon ending at the Asia Society in New York, in a show covering 15 artists selected by art historian Salima Hashmi, an accomplished artist herself. It is quite a lesson to the uninformed and untravelled American. If its catalog could serve as a textbook, then it should be in every classroom. Even television pundits might learn.

I am not an art critic and know very little about new trends in the art world today. Initially, I was less attracted to the "Contemporary Art" half of the show's title than to its "from Pakistan". Thus I went to the exhibition hoping to learn about more than just the country's art- granted, an unfair and unwanted burden to ask artists to carry. I left the show feeling, yes, I had seen its art but not found Pakistan, beyond what each artist was willing- some more, some less - to reveal.

In any case, how can fifteen artists represent their 180 million countrymen? Yes, the show is small, and as the New York Times reviewer wrote, the Asia Society too often tasks artists with saying something profound about their nation's politics and society. And what about the artists in exile, missing home yet able to boost careers in New York and London galleries as if they were windows through which Westerners could see Pakistan.

At the Asia Society, the case is nearly the opposite. Most of the artists are not spread around the globe, but full or part-time residents of Karachi and Lahore. Many are graduates of the National College of Arts, either teaching there or exhibiting locally so that even younger Pakistani artists might see their work.

In Hashmi's introduction to the catalog, she gets straight to the point about how politics and art are intertwined in Pakistan, if not always in overt subject matter and theme, then in more subterranean ways. She describes how she had been sitting in her Lahore gallery, lit by candles because of power cuts, planning the opening of a show by Faiza Butt, just after Benazir Bhutto's assassination. She was speaking with Butt and fellow artist Naiza Khan about how their lives as women had been etched by troubled times, how their work as artists had been pushed aside by power brokers and military men. Yet the art at that exhibit still packed a punch. Under the dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq, what is on view at the Asia Society might have landed some of these artists in jail.

And thus the title of the Asia Society show- Hanging Fire...that split second of dread, with target impact still unknown, between the pull of the trigger and the release of the bullet. The show covers so many forms of modern media- video and fiberglass, pop-up paper and wall installation, taxidermy and kitchenware, pixelated photo montage and documentary street photography, and yes, even paint on canvas- that a Western viewer's more conventional expectations about tradition and continuity in South Asian art are called into question. What were we expecting, Mughal miniatures and calligraphy? Yes, there is that too, but with a twist.

Butt's two ink on backlit polyester film drawings, *Get Out of My Dreams I and II*, open the show and might stand as a microcosm for its entirety. Candy-colored *pointilliste* icons of segregated masculine and feminine worlds- pistols and hair dryers, clothing irons and carving knives, bonbons and US currency notes, ice cream cones and German war flags- mash together and surround languorously posed men with kohl-rimmed eyes, rouged lips, and neatly trimmed mustaches and beards, each with a forelock curl peeking from under stark white turbans. If they were women, men would see these figures as objects of straightforward desire. But as they are men, the entire notion of male desire becomes complicated.

Rashid Rana's *Red Carpet I* is a huge 8' x 11' pixelated photo that appears to depict, when viewed from a distance, a center medallion oriental carpet of the quality common to American living rooms, the kind bought in any upscale department store. Standing very close, one sees the image is composed of micro-photos of bloody mayhem- slaughterhouse scenes of goat carcasses and butchers. Rana has said that he likes to bury hidden meaning inside his art, to juxtapose the less visible with the more visible, just as a donkey cart on a Lahore street is less visible than a Mercedes. Something about this- whether the playfulness or the mystery- apparently has strong appeal in New York. The piece had sold for more than a half million dollars at a Sotheby's auction there in 2008.

Video artist Bani Abidi and neo-miniature painter Imran Qureshi make more overt appeals to an American's preconceptions about what is Pakistan. Abidi's

“Shan Pipe Band Learns the Star Spangled Banner” is a seven minute observational one-take film that captures the middle of a practice session of a brass and pipe band, a colonial holdover for military parades, that she had hired to learn the American national anthem. Its off-key and out-of-rhythm starts and stops are simultaneously humorous and frightening. An American might assume, rightly or wrongly, that even a Pakistani ear would recognize their anthem from frequent playing on Olympic games television broadcasts, and thus would hear the yawning gap between intention and result, between message sent and message received.

Qureshi’s miniatures from the series “Moderate Enlightenment” play ironically on Musharraf’s 2004 Enlightened Moderation policy, by which he sought to control his “fundamentalists” by getting Western powers to control their own, hoping they could meet amicably somewhere in the middle. But in practice, where is that?

Qureshi has shown us, in his pictures of a head-covered woman with a book and purse clasped under her arm, a skull-capped student wearing camouflage-pattern socks, and a bearded, shirtless body builder pumping iron- all painted in the meticulous fashion of Mughal royal portraiture. Erstwhile extremists, now seeking personal improvement in their physique and intellect.

Standing in front of his paintings at the exhibit opening, Qureshi introduced me to his friend who had recently moved from Lahore to New York. She was wearing a camouflage hoodie- “Just something I threw on to come out tonight”, she laughed. An odd choice I thought for a dressy occasion on Park Avenue. Qureshi looked more than pleased.

And what to make of Huma Mulji’s taxidermied water buffalo perched atop a ten foot Greek column, or Hamra Abbas’ cherry red fiberglass version of Buraq that seems to invite a child to mount him as a rocking horse, or Adeela Suleman’s scooter helmets assembled from gaily decorated tinpot kitchenwares, or Asma Mundrawala’s paper pop-ups that land somewhere between a Bollywood set designer’s maquette and a Joseph Cornell box? Can they really all be traced, as Hashmi implies, back to the austere near-abstraction of Zahoor ul Akhlaq (1941-1999), who serves as her touchstone for the contemporary.

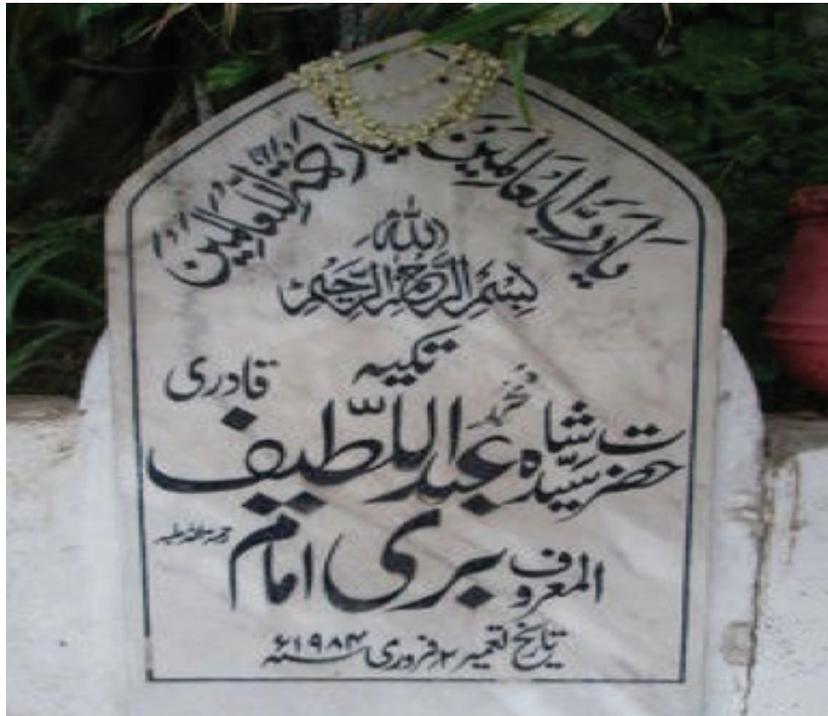
If it is true as critic Quddus Mirza contends in his catalog essay, that Pakistani artists who work at home have also become exiles at home, showing their work only to fellow artists and sending it out through the mediasphere and market to international galleries and museums, it is no surprise. Few artists in New York can afford the rents anywhere near the gallery district. Talk about a sense of exile!

An Escapade to Saidpur – A Model Village

By Shaikh Muhammad Ali
(The wandering Dervish)

Since my parents came here from Karachi earlier this month, I have been wanting to take them to all the tourist spots in Islamabad (as if there are too many around). This particular visit (amongst others) was to the much trumpeted Saidpur village on a sleepy Sunday last week.

On the way from my ‘ghareeb khana’ (read house) in E-11/4, Islamabad, I was flying on the Margalla road when I remembered to stop at the ‘Takia’ (read resting place) of Shah Abdul Latif (aka Bari Imam). We suddenly traveled back in time when we visualized as to how a tired Bari Sarkar must have sat down under this huge banyan tree after a long walk from his abode in Nurpur Shahan, his native village.



We later moved on to our destination and I almost missed the left turn going to Saidpur. Going to Saidpur was an experience in itself where we again traveled to a time when ancient Hindus inhabited this place and visited the Hindu temple. The general impression we were given was that this village is approximately 450 years old, but I strongly believe that it is much older.

Lately, the Criminal oops Capital Development Authority (CDA) has been trying to bring this ancient village back to its original form and granduer. It is thanks to the writings of the CDA and the newspaper DAWN that most of us (ignorant types) have gotten a chance to discover such places. I believe the place is being re-modeled with the help of Italian and French architects.

The ambiance is beautiful which opens with the 'Autak' (Sitting Area) of Mr. Said (the man after whom the village has taken its name) on the left and a small but simple mosque on the right. It is slightly disturbing to notice that in less than a distance of $\frac{1}{4}$ kilometer there is another mosque, for which there is no need since one would have easily sufficed.

As we proceed, there is a wall walking next to us, a part of which seems to be newly constructed while some parts seem to be rather old. Different stories abound regarding the dates when this wall was built. Further down the road we came to a temple on the left which has been renovated in gaudy colors of yellowish orange. The CDA could have done much better than that. My mother, who hails from Rajputana, India and was brought up in the royal family of Nawab Tallae Muhammad Khan of Palanpur, strongly protested this grotesque rhapsody of colors. On the right is another small piece of architecture which was probably used to keep statues of Shiva, Hanuman Ji or Ganesh Ji for that matter.

Straight ahead there is a bigger chamber which could easily fit a small church, but the natives were apparently using it as a school. I am pretty sure that the local Muslims must have left no stone unturned to desecrate the holy place of the Hindus which is more of a treasure from the past. This rectangular chamber has now been converted into a museum which houses more pictures of the ground breaking of the nascent Islamabad city with foreign dignitaries spading their way through the early days of Islamabad and less of the culture and history of the place under discussion.

Mom and I later moved inside the village while Dad rested and chatted with the locals (he always makes friends with them easily). We visited the creative workshop of the famous Lal Din, the clay potter who used to put life in his art work here. Now, all there remains in his workshop are his picture and his sweaty son who is trying to save his father's profession from extinction while creating half baked pottery. I took a few pictures and bought a few pieces of his handy work.

Ali

We later moved back to the main entrance area where luckily we met the grandson of Lal Muhammad, i.e. Nazakat who incidentally has left the dying profession of clay pottery and has taken to fisheries. He also had a few sad stories to tell about the deterioration in the life patterns in the – model village.



(Sitting from left to right: Villager1, the writer, Nazakat, the writer's father, Villager2)

And how could I have left the place without visiting the 'guzargah' passage of Hazrat Khizar, the Zinda Pir (read living prophet). There are all kinds of legends about this place. I personally feel that this Pir must have visited this village when this was the abode of Hindus and he may have been instrumental in converting a few Hindus to Islam through his message of love, peace and humility; Pakistan being a predominantly Muslim country.

The walk up the hill is rather steep and tiring especially for somebody like me who has given up hiking and mountaineering some fifteen years ago. Nevertheless, after much panting and torture I did manage to scale the small hillock and, to my astonishment, the place had a spiritual air to itself. I was suddenly among the clouds of 'Tassawuf' (Sufism) and the breathtaking view of the village down

below and of the high rises of Islamabad were awe inspiring. After offering ‘fatiha’ (prayers) at the grave beside the ‘baithak’ (Sitting area) and pondering over the inter-twined banyan trees, I retreated down.



After saying my ‘Maghrib’ prayers in the local mosque, I collected my parents, who were both lost in their own orbits of time and space, and called it a day. The memories of this trip haunted all three of us ‘Shaikhs’ for days in a row.

The writer is a free lance novice / aspirant cum Sufi who is anything but a writer and is searching for an identity. He can indeed be reached at dushka1@cyber.net.pk

Failures of Modernization Theories

By Asad Zaman

Pride resulting from global dominance and spectacular scientific and technological developments led Europeans to believe that the West was the most advanced and developed of all societies. Other societies were primitive and under-developed. As these other societies matured and grew, they would follow the same stages that were followed by the West, and eventually become like modern Western societies. Early thinkers like Comte described the stages in growth from primitive society to modern ones in a 'logical' sequence. The enterprise of colonizing the non-European world was painted in bright terms as being part of the "White Man's burden" of bringing enlightenment, good government, science, technology and other benefits of Western civilization to the rest of the world. Until the 60's modernization theorists, like Parsons and Rostow echoed these sentiments, regarding Westernization as a desirable and inevitable process for the rest of the world. The goal of this article is to discuss some of the difficulties which led to substantial reconsideration of these naïve views. Current views (for example, *Development as Freedom* by Amartya Sen) are much more complex and diverse, and generally more respectful of other ancient civilizations in the world.

The first problem with the modernization theories is the deeply racist world-view embedded in them. The Dred-Scott decision in the USA declared that blacks were "beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." Australian aborigines were hunted like animals by the British. Lord Cecil Rhodes declared that "I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings; what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence ... " He became the richest man in the world at the time by fully exploiting those 'despicable specimens of human beings' in the British colonies. While explicit and open racism has largely been abandoned in modern times, remnants of these racist views still persist. There is debate at the highest levels in the USA as to whether or not Muslims can self-govern! See "Bush

Cites Racism in Remarks On Iraq” in *Washington Post*, Saturday, May 1, 2004. Nobel Prize winner Watson has suggested that differences in development levels may be explained by genetic endowments. Harvard professor Bell maintains that blacks have lower IQ than whites.

A second problem with modernization theories is that it has become abundantly clear that high sounding moral ideas have served as a cover for very low and despicable purposes. In *King Leopold's Ghost*, Adam Hochschild documents the extremely cruel, oppressive and exploitative treatment meted out to Africans which resulted in the death of 4 to 8 million in the Belgian Congo alone. In the name of bringing them the benefits of European civilization, King Leopold's officials used extremely harsh methods to force the locals to collect rubber. To teach the locals Western work ethics, the Belgians took wives and children hostage and kept them in subhuman conditions until their African husbands fulfilled their quotas. Soldiers would torture, chop off hands, or kill the inhabitants if they faltered in their work. All of these policies were promoted and advertised as Christian charity for the benefit of the natives. Similar policies are also currently in operation. According to testimony of high-placed officials like Paul O'Neill, Alan Greenspan, and Henry Kissinger, the Iraq war was planned for the control of the vast oil resources of Iraq. However, the White House vehemently denies this view, and alleges high motives like the desire to bring democracy to Iraq. While every US soldier killed is counted, no one counts the millions of inferior lives destroyed by the Iraq war. The vast amount of torture, arbitrary killings of civilians, destruction of Iraqi infrastructure and entire cities, and the resulting miseries of the populace, has surfaced in alternative media, but only occasionally breaks through to the mainstream media in USA.

A third problem with modernization theories is that they have failed to deliver results. All across the world, “structural adjustment programs” (SAPs) were designed and implemented by expert economists to help improve economic performance. Even proponents from IMF and World Bank now widely acknowledge that these policies have been failures. Critics, including Nobel Laureate Stiglitz, claim that these SAP's are a major cause of poverty all over the world. Under General Pinochet, the Chilean economy was turned into a laboratory experiment in free market economics by the “Chicago boys.” Advice from Nobel prize winning economist Milton Friedman followed strictly for several years resulted only in lackluster growth and continued high unemployment. Faith in the miracles of the free market led only to disappointment and failure when “shock treatment” was applied to the Russian economy. Pressure by US economists for financial liberalization led directly to the East Asian crisis. Throughout the world, numerous vigorously pursued programs for modernization and development along Western models have only led to chaos, cultural conflicts, and confusion.

The idea that Western models are perfect in all areas, including social, cultural and economic, leads to the dominant role of foreign expert advisors in development. These experts need to know nothing about local conditions, customs, traditions, because all of these are just obstacles in the path to progress. They come to a country knowing the solutions in advance, and give advice on how to move from existing patterns to Western ones in the shortest possible time. The havoc wrecked by this disregard and ignorance of local issues has been very well documented by Mitchell in *The Rule of Experts*. Studies of successful models for development (post-war Germany, Japan, communist Russia, East Asian Tigers) show that the strategies used there were often in opposition to those recommended by conventional economics. World Bank economists writing about *The East Asian Miracle* admit that in most of these economies, the government intervened systematically, through multiple channels, to foster development. Despite these systematic violations of neoclassical prescriptions for development, these countries achieved the highest rates of productivity growth and fastest development seen at that time in the historical record.

Lessons from studies of successful development strategies are abundantly clear. Each such country has developed by disregarding foreign advice, and developing their own strategies. Self-reliance, self confidence, trust, cooperation and methods adapted to local conditions and culture have been crucial to success. Slavish imitation of Western models and an inferiority complex are the biggest obstacles to progress. Cultural conflicts due to modernization, created by one segment of society opting for Western ways and another holding to traditions, have prevented the social harmony and unity necessary for progress.

The Gojra Murders and the Blasphemy Law

By Mehreen Zahra-Malik

Should the law concern itself with blasphemy? Following the Gojra massacre where eight Christians were killed after days of tension sparked by the rumoured desecration of a Quran, this question, as well as the debate on the blasphemy laws, whether they should be retained, reformed or abolished, has once again assumed major socio-legal importance. The arguments which characterise this debate raise fundamental issues about the relationship between law, religion, politics and culture in Pakistan and manifest some of the pivotal conflicts of Pakistani society today. Major justifications for retaining laws against blasphemy, besides the obvious duty of a Muslim to protect the faith, include arguments about the relationship between religion and morality as well as the maintenance of public order. Both arguments reveal the general direction the Law has taken in this country. Both are also logically and empirically flawed.

On talk shows and in the vernacular press is repeatedly reproduced Lord Devlin's famous attack on the position which he characterises as a separation of law and morality. Lord Devlin's justification: that 'without the support of the Churches the moral order, which has its origin in and takes its strength from Christian beliefs, would collapse', that 'no society has yet solved the problem of how to teach morality without religion', and that 'without the help of Christian teaching the law will fail'.

In Pakistan today, Devlin's ghost speaks whenever the subject of blasphemy is raised. The law has to protect Islam because that means protecting '*our* system of morality'. But for such a justification to be tenable, it cannot stop at the argument about the enforcement of morals alone, but must go a step ahead and defend legal intrusion by showing that religious faith, and therefore moral beliefs, are actually sustained by such laws. Such a defence would be difficult to maintain for several reasons.

One, it doesn't seem that blasphemy laws have had much impact, one way or the other, on the level of religiosity. Two, the protection of religion for moral purposes is unfeasible in a society where some, even a few, base their morality – *if* it is accepted that morality does ensue from religion – on a religion other than the

dominant one. Indeed, there is enough evidence in Pakistan of the mischief created in the name of blasphemy.

Most importantly, the argument about moral utility provides no rationale for restricting criminality only to abusive and offensive attacks upon religion. 295C of the Pakistan Penal Code 1860 stipulates that any person who ‘by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly’ defiles the name of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), is liable for blasphemy, and in addition to a fine, shall be punished with the death sentence or imprisonment for life. Such a law then stifles even the sober, balanced and well-reasoned critiques of societal attitudes and mores, which is an intolerable restriction on freedom of inquiry and clashes directly with the norms of democracy. In this case, then, the defence of a blasphemy law in terms of its moral utility seems entirely irrelevant.

The second major argument for why the law should concern itself with blasphemy has to do with maintenance of public order. This is one of the most commonly cited reasons for limiting freedom of expression, accepted not just by theologians and elements from the right but also by political thinkers such as JS Mill and John Rawls. However, if the law has to concern itself with religious expression because it may provoke breaches of peace, this does not justify a law that concerns itself specifically with blasphemy. Those who speak of reform or of abolishing the existing law of blasphemy are no less concerned about threats to public order than those in favour of the law. What they are arguing is that such threats should be dealt with not through blasphemy laws but by better laws of public order in general.

It should be obvious, then, that while the defence of a blasphemy law in terms of its moral utility claims too much, appeals to public order prove too little.

Indeed, the public order argument seems even more problematic given that since its enactment in 1986, 295C has frequently been misused to intimidate or punish religious minorities and to settle personal scores. Ironically, many moderate Muslims have also fallen victim to the blasphemy laws. The mandatory capital punishment accompanying the charge is a matter of controversy even in Islamic circles. One could even argue that the very existence of laws regarding blasphemy promotes antagonism towards minorities and gives Muslim fanatics a warrant to take the law into their own hands.

In several mosques, it is taught that those who commit blasphemy deserve to be killed; that protecting a blasphemer is as bad as blaspheming itself. One can be arrested for blasphemy without a warrant and imprisoned without bail. Many people accused of blasphemy have been killed while standing trial and lower courts have invariably awarded the death sentence to the accused because of threats from extremists groups.

At a broader level, then, the problem is about a societal attitude, a certain kind of mindset, that creates bad laws and also nourishes their misuse. Consider that in 2000, Lahore High Court Judge Mr Justice Nazir Akhtar publicly stated that it was the religious obligation of Muslims to kill on the spot anyone accused of blasphemy; for a blasphemer, there was no need for any legal proceedings. The statement reflects the extent of judicial bias on the subject. It also suggests how the Law tragically stands for certain enduring attitudes. The state and its branches have, for their own reasons, fallen for the agenda of the Right and created a schema which works to the advantage of the Right, such that we are grappling now not just with a bad law but with enduring attitudes that ensure that, in theory, even if this law were removed or changed, people would continue to be harassed and even killed.

Consider that during the proceedings of one blasphemy case, the accusers built a gallows outside the courtroom to signify that even if the court found the accused not guilty, the crowds would carry out the required punishment themselves.

As harsh as this may sound, the Pakistani state and public must acknowledge that characteristics usually connected with fascist movements are among some of those visible in extremist politics in Pakistan today: the systematic manipulation of ignorance, victimisation of members of a particular community, the use of unconstitutional tactics against certain groups, and so on. Indeed, Gojra and similar incidents are a classic example of the political use of people's gullibility to engender extremism. The Muslims who were mobilised in Gojra accepted unreasoned claims by the inciters of violence as well as the bizarre ethical argument that these claims actually justified the killing of people.

As complex and multi-dimensional as the situation is, a solution must come in the form of single-minded opposition by the public and the government. Obscurantism thrives on lack of education and awareness. In Pakistan, the problem is exacerbated when to the traditional problem of illiteracy is added the danger of slanted instruction. The government must intervene on this count. As recommended by Amartya Sen and others regarding extremist politics in India, the weakest link in the extremist chain in Pakistan too is a basic reliance on ignorance. That is where a confrontation is most necessary.

In simple terms, this would mean that political authorities must stop appeasing the Right. Indeed, the appeal of fundamentalisms of all kinds in Pakistan has grown alongside the decline of the moral authority of the state. Around the world, there is a recrudescence of religion, partly attributed to the moral meaning of existence which modern institutions so thoroughly tend to dissolve. Even for developed democracies, the problem of how to combine resurgent pre-modern belief with an acknowledgment of the need for rationalisation and accommodation among different interests, is a daunting one.

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In Pakistan, where we still have to figure out the basics of law, politics and religion, blasphemy and laws regarding it could very well present one of the most decisive indicators of the future cultural and political direction of the state. By the same token, the crisis offers a chance to abandon the discourse of double standards and embrace the notion of the rights of every Pakistani *as a* Pakistani. In a country about which it is commonly asked whether it is possible to be both a non-Muslim and a Pakistani, perhaps a profound re-imagination of the nation itself is required.

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In Other Rooms, Other Wonders

By Daniyal Mueenuddin

Husna needed a job. She stole up the long drive to the Lahore house of the retired civil servant and landlord K. K. Harouni, bearing in her little lacquered fingers a letter of introduction from, of all people, his estranged first wife. The butler, knowing that Husna served the old Begum Harouni in an indefinite capacity, somewhere between maidservant and companion, did not seat her in the living room. Instead he put her in the office of the secretary, who every afternoon took down in shorthand a few pages of Mr. Harouni's memoirs, cautiously titled *Perhaps This Happened*.

Ushered into the living room by the secretary after a quarter of an hour, Husna gazed around her, as petitioners do, more tense than curious, taking in the worn gold brocade on the sofa, a large Chinese painting of horsemen over the rosewood mantel. Her attention was drawn to ranks of black-and-white photographs in silver frames, hunters wearing shooting caps posed with strings of birds or piles of game, several of women in saris, their hair piled high in the style of the fifties, one in riding breeches, with an oversized dedication in looping script. To the side stood a photo of Harouni in a receiving line shaking the hand of a youthful Jawaharlal Nehru.

The door opened, and Mr. Harouni walked in, a mild look on his handsome golden face. Placing a file on the table in front of him, the secretary flipped through the pages and showed the old man where to sign, murmuring, "Begum Sahiba has sent this young miss with a letter, sir."

Although he had an excellent memory, and knew the lineage of all the old Lahore families, K.K. allowed Husna to explain in detail her relation to him, which derived from his grandmother on his mother's side. The senior branch of the family consolidated its lands and amassed power under the British, who made use of the landowning gentry to govern. Husna's family, a cadet branch, had not so much fallen into poverty as failed to rise. Her grandfather had still owned thirty or forty shops in the Lahore Old City, but these were sold off before the prices increased, when Lahore grew in the 1950s and 1960s. Encouraged by K.K., given tea and cakes, Husna forgot herself, falling into the common, rich Punjabi of the inner city. She told with great emphasis a story about her mother, who remembered having

fallen and broken her teeth on the steps leading into the courtyard of a lost family home, which were tall and broad to accommodate the enormous tread of a riding elephant, emblematic of the family's status.

Husna was silent for a moment, then narrowed her eyes, collected herself. "In this world some families rise and some fall," she said, suddenly cold rather than postulant. "And now I've come to you for help. I'm poor and need a job. Even Begum Harouni agrees that I should have a profession. My father can give me nothing, he's weak and has lost his connections. Everyone says I should marry, but I won't."

• • •

Outside the drawing room, overlooking a side patio, a gardener switched on yard lights, illuminating a cemented swimming pool half filled with rainwater and leaves. A servant came in with an armful of wood, threw it with a crash into the fireplace, then took a bottle of kerosene and poured a liberal splash. He threw in a match and the fire roared up. For a minute he sat on his haunches by the fire, grave before this immemorial mystery, then broke the spell, rose, and left the room.

A car drove into the long circular driveway, and a brushed-looking elderly couple entered the room. Coming up and kissing Harouni on the cheek, the woman said in a husky voice, "Hello, darling." The man, gray beside his brightly dressed companion, mustache trimmed, waited to one side.

"Hello, Riffat," said Harouni, kissing her on the top of the head and then going over to the wall and pressing a bell. "Will you have a drink, Husky?"

The man glanced at his wife. "I'll have a small whiskey."

The woman eyed Husna, as if pricing her, and Husna shrank into herself. She hadn't been prepared for this. The visitor wore a pinkish *kurta*, too young for her but certainly very expensive, finely printed with a silver design.

"This is Husna," said K.K. to the woman, who had taken a seat on the sofa beside the young girl. "Husna will graduate soon and is looking for a teaching position."

"How interesting," said the woman, her voice confiding and smoky.

They had been speaking in English, and Husna exposed her poor accent, saying, "It is very good to meet you."

Two servants carried in a tea trolley and placed it before the newcomer, and Rafik, the butler who had seated Husna in the secretary's office, brought two whiskeys on a small silver tray.

"Cheers," said Husky, taking a sip and very slightly smacking his lips. "How nice to have a fire."

Riffat Begum poured out tea, offering a cup to Husna. The conversation wandered, and Riffat looked meaningfully at Husna once or twice. When she went out in society with Begum Harouni, Husna was not a guest, not even really a presence, but a recourse for the old lady, to fetch and carry, to stay beside her so that the begum would not be left sitting alone. Unable now to meet the occasion, Husna followed the conversation from face to face, sinking, the skin around her mouth taut as if frozen. Abruptly she stood up, catching a foot on the tea trolley, rattling the cups and saucers.

“Thank you, Uncle, for your help and your kind advice,” she said, although K.K. had given her no advice whatsoever. She meant this as an opening to him, at least as a reproach.

“Let me have the car drop you.” He followed Husna out into the verandah, while the driver brought the car. “First of all, you need to develop some skills,” he said. “Why don’t you learn to type? Come tomorrow and I’ll arrange for Shah Sahib to give you lessons.”

As she got in the car he gave her a fatherly kiss on the cheek.

When he returned to the living room, Riffat raised an eyebrow and pursed her lips. “Naughty naughty,” she said, exhaling a cloud of cigarette smoke.

K.K. took a sip of whiskey. “At my age, my dear, she’s in no danger.”

Husna came every few days for typing lessons. She would sit in the dark little office off the living room, inconveniencing Shah Sahib, the secretary, who could not continue his own work till she had abandoned her weak efforts. He tried to show her the correct technique, but she refused to learn, and insisted upon typing by hunt and peck, getting through her daily half page as quickly as possible. One of the servants would bring her a cup of mixed tea, which she drank with Shah Sahib, who also at that time received two slices of grilled cheese toast, a treat that made his stomach growl, and one that he ensured by being of service to the cook, passing his bills without question.

K. K. Harouni, who had been a polo and tennis player until he suffered a heart attack seven years earlier, took a walk morning and evening, totaling exactly four miles each day. Usually he went from end to end of the serpentine back garden, but a few days after Husna began her lessons, a winter rain wet the grass. Mildly enjoying the break in routine, that evening he walked on the brick-paved front driveway, looping around a circular lawn and through a carport in which a misplaced glass chandelier cast a friendly yellow light.

At dusk he heard a rickshaw enter the drive and park at the far end, next to the gatekeeper’s shelter, its two-stroke engine crackling. After a moment a figure stepped from the door of the secretary’s office and tripped rapidly down toward the gate. Lengthening his stride, K.K. came up behind her.

“Hello, Husna,” he said.

She stopped and turned. As before, she wore too much makeup and clothes too bright. She held her large white purse on a long chain over one shoulder, and had covered her hair with a *dupatta*. “Hello, Uncle,” she said, her face involuntarily stretching into a broad smile.

“You’re very cheerful. And how are your lessons?”

“Thank you, Uncle,” she said.

“Why don’t you walk with me?”

“My ride is waiting.” She spoke timidly, for she felt ashamed to be seen taking a rickshaw, which only poor people used.

“Tell him to go, and later the driver can take you.”

• • •

They began walking, Husna taking two strides to every one of his, clicking along in her heels. Her feet began to hurt, and whenever they came to a puddle he would step aside and allow her to go first, so that she had to hurry awkwardly in front of him.

“Those shoes aren’t good for walking,” he said, looking at her from behind as she skirted a puddle. “Your feet are hurting, aren’t they?”

“No, it’s fine, really it is.” She didn’t want to lose this chance of his company.

“Why don’t you take them off. Don’t be shy, there’s no one here.”

“You’re joking with me, Uncle.”

Hesitating for a moment, she reached down and undid the straps, her hand tentatively on his shoulder.

When they came to the next puddle, he stopped, amused. “And now that you’re barefoot, let’s see you jump over the puddle.”

Quickening, she glanced at him sideways, still a girl at twenty, still playing tag with her cousins in the courtyard of her parents’ home; and yet now aware of men’s eyes flickering over her as she walked through the lanes of the Old City.

He took her hand and swung it. “One, two, three, over you go!”

She hesitated for moment, refusing the jump, then leapt, landing just at the edge and splashing.

“Try again, the second one!” he urged, and she jumped the next puddle, clearing it with a bump, then turning to face him, laughing.

“Well done! I’ve had ponies that couldn’t do as well.”

“Now you *are* joking with me.”

Rafik came out to the drive and reported a telephone call from K.K.’s youngest daughter, Sarwat, who was married to a tremendously wealthy industrialist and

lived in Karachi. He went inside, walking unhurriedly, and Husna sat down in one of the chairs placed in the verandah for the petitioners who came each morning, asking the old man for letters to government officials or asking for work on his farms.

Rafik stood next to her, relaxed, looking out into the night. He glanced at her bare feet but made no comment.

“So, Husna Bibi,” he said, “how are the good people over at Begum Sahib’s house? How is Chacha Latif?”

Chacha Latif played the corresponding role of butler in the house of K.K.’s estranged wife, and Rafik maintained cordial relations with him. As a matter of comity they kept each other informed of household gossip.

Understanding this oblique reference to the fact that Chacha Latif treated her with little ceremony, as an equal, Husna sweetly replied, “He’s well, Uncle, thank you.”

“Give him my regards, young lady,” said Rafik, settling the matter.

K. K. Harouni came out and resumed walking with Husna. Finishing two measured miles, twenty rounds, he invited her to dinner, asking for it on a trolley in the living room, which would be less intimidating for her.

As she rode home in the back seat of K.K.’s large if old car, looking at the back of the chauffeur’s immense head, Husna’s complex thoughts ran along several lines. Given to fits of crushing gray lassitude and then to sunny, almost hysterical moments, she had always believed she would escape the gloominess of her parents’ house in an unfashionable part of the city. She would escape the bare concrete steps, layered with dust, leading up into rooms without windows, the walls painted bright glossy colors, as if to make up for the gloom, the television covered with an embroidered cloth. She had spoiled herself with daydreams, until her parents were afraid of her moods. She despised them for living so much in the past, retelling the stories of their grandparents’ land and money, and yet at the same time she felt entitled to rejoin that world and felt aggrieved for being excluded from it. Her pride took the form of stubbornness—like others who rise above their station, she refused to accept her present status. Taking service in an ambiguous position with Begum Harouni had been the greatest concession she ever made to her mediocre prospects, and having made this concession increased her determination to rise, although she had no idea how to go about it.

Husna knew that she could never hope to marry or attract a young man from one of the rich established families. Wearing clothes just better than those of a maidservant, she saw them from a distance at the weddings to which she accompanied Begum Harouni. At that time, in the 1980s, the old barons still dominated the government, the prime minister a huge feudal landowner. Their sons, at least

the quick ones, the adapted ones, became ministers at thirty, immaculate, blowing through dull parties, making an appearance, familiar with their elders, on their way to somewhere else, cool rooms where ice and alcohol glowed on the table, those rooms where deals were made; as she imagined them blowing through foreign airports, at ease in European cities that she read about. She would even have sought a place in the demimonde of singers and film actresses, bright and dangerous creatures from poor backgrounds—no upper-class woman would dream of entering those professions—but she had neither talent nor beauty. Only determination and cunning distinguished her, invisible qualities.

The chauffeur, knowing without being told that Husna would not wish to be seen coming home late at night in the old man's car, dropped her just inside the gate of the house in fashionable Gulberg. K.K. gave this house to his wife when finally and uncharacteristically he made a firm decision and told her she must leave. Unable to keep Harouni's attention, barely out of *purdah*, she had tried amulets, philters, spells—he joked to his friends that she would end up poisoning him by accident. But one day she came into the verandah off his bedroom, where he and a lady friend were having tea and innocently playing rummy. A woman with a sharp temper, she stood humped and spitting in Punjabi, "Leave my house, leave my husband alone, you witch!" And Harouni's friend, a convent-schooled society woman who barely spoke Punjabi and had only a vague idea who this lady might be, kept asking, "But what's she saying, K.K.? Should I leave?" He had not, however, divorced his wife, having no intention of remarrying and no desire to humiliate her. Old Begum Harouni thereafter lived in a state of suspended equilibrium, hoping to be recalled to her husband's side. She would naturally have been furious to learn that Husna had just eaten dinner alone with K.K.

Husna cautiously walked up the straight, long drive, bordered with bougainvillea and jasmine. She went to the back, where the servants lay in a courtyard under blankets, and slipped through the open kitchen door, through the filthy kitchen, which smelled of garlic and curry, and into the heavily carpeted dining room. Over the fireplace, which had not been lit in years, she saw her face in a mirror. The irregularity of her features, her straight, dry hair, her small mouth, all caused her to cringe inwardly and suddenly to feel vulnerable, to feel the stupidity of a few remembered comments that escaped her that evening. She felt the immensity of her encounter with K. K. Harouni. The old lady didn't wake when Husna crept in, but almost at dawn called her, saying she couldn't sleep, and told the young girl to massage her legs.

Husna continued going for lessons, and thrice in the first weeks walked with K.K., who then sent her home in the car. She tried to limit these encounters, fearing that Begum Harouni would discover the growing relationship and would send her

away, back to her parents. On the days when she allowed herself to see him, Husna would sit in the office after the secretary left, beside a window that overlooked the long garden where K.K. walked. She didn't read, but sat at the desk surrounded by books both in English and Urdu, her chin resting on her hands. She did not even plan, but floated through images.

Seeing a girl her age stepping from a large new car in Liberty Market, among the expensive shops, or glittering in a pair of diamond drops at a wedding, Husna's mind would hang on these symbols of wealth, not letting go for hours. She sensed that all this might come to her through Harouni, if she became his mistress. In the Old City where she grew up, the neighborhood pointed with shaming fingers at women from less than respectable families who were kept by merchants. The eyes of these creatures glided over the crowd as they rode on *tongas*, emerging untouched from dark streets where sewage flowed in the drain, prominent as targets in brightest red silk, lipstick, gold. Husna's mother ground out remarks of the price to be paid, broken relations with family, broken old age.

The young girl's fear of Harouni had dissipated, and she let herself be seen, critical, quick-witted, sensual, and slightly crude. Not despite but because of his sophistication, he found her manner piquant. She behaved and spoke unlike the women he normally met, for she had always inhabited an indefinite space, neither rich nor poor, neither servant nor begum, in a city where the very concept of a middle class still found expression only in a few households, managers of foreign banks and of the big industrial concerns, sugar and textiles and steel. As a boy Harouni slept with maidservants; lost his virginity to one of them at fourteen. Husna evoked those ripe first encounters.

Six weeks after Husna's first walk with K.K., Begum Harouni announced a pilgrimage to the holy places, in order to perform the *hajj*. Husna decided that evening to bring the begum's impending departure into the conversation, before guests came and interrupted them. She had begun to understand the management of the old man, how to introduce subjects.

When he entered the living room for afternoon tea, K.K. heard the typewriter clacking in the background. It stopped, and then Husna knocked, opened the door, showed her head without entering.

"Come in, my dear."

Her cultivation of the butler Rafik had progressed, to the point that, without being asked, he included an extra cup on the tea trolley. She drew herself forward and made K.K.'s tea exactly as he liked it. A boy passed a plate of biscuits, while Rafik stood back on his heels by the door.

"When I'm here," said Husna, "everything is so nice and everyone is pleasant. These biscuits, the tea. Shah Sahib tries so hard to teach me the typing, though

I can't seem to learn." She held out her hands and spread the fingers in front of him, like a cat stretching. "My hands are so tiny, I can't reach the keys. But then all of me is small."

She wore a fitted *kurta*, showing the cleft of her breasts, which jutted out from her muscular youthful torso. Their eyes met; they both saw the joke, and he allowed himself a tight-lipped smile, his normally placid expression becoming knowing and avid.

"That's what I've been telling you about," purred Husna, putting her hand on his arm. "Your crocodile smile, the one I like."

After pausing for a moment to clear the air, she lowered her eyes and said in a meek voice, "But soon I won't be able to come here. The begum is going on *hajj*, so I'll have to be in charge of her house."

"Not *hajj* again!" said K.K. "It's becoming a vice with her. But darling, don't be ridiculous. If she's away you can come even more regularly."

"When the begum is gone they don't cook any food at all, just the servants' food. I go sometimes into the bazaar to eat. And Begum Sahiba doesn't like me to use the electricity."

"You poor thing," said K.K. "And you ask so little."

Husna's eyes became moist. "Yesterday Begum Sahiba had gone out when I got back to the house, and she had locked all the doors and taken the keys with her. I stood under the trees in front for three hours. And if I eat anything from the refrigerator she becomes angry at me. And when she's gone on *hajj* the servants will take liberties, they make jokes and want me to sit with them. She won't leave me any money." She wiped her eyes with her *dupatta*, head cast down. "When Begum Sahiba is harsh, what can I do?"

"Come, little one," said K.K., patting the sofa next to him. "Come sit here. Don't cry." K. K. Harouni avoided unpleasantness at all costs, for he lived in a world as measured and as concentric as that of the Sun King at Versailles. He did not like to see her cry, because it upset him. She stepped out around the tea table, wiping a tear with one arm, and then slipped into the place next to him and nestled under his arm, still tearful, but now muffling her face in his sweater. He stroked her hair.

"Now stop," he said. "Why don't you come stay here while the begum is on *hajj*? I'll have them fix up the rooms in the annex."

Husna looked out from under her eyelashes and smiled weakly. "Oh, I would like that too much. Then I could keep you company when you're alone and make your tea for you. And I would practice typing every day for a long time. And I'll study for the M.A. exams."

K.K. cared nothing for what his wife or the servants thought. He ordered the annex to be prepared, a suite of rooms built over garages at the far side of the compound. The rooms had been refurbished several years earlier, when important guests from India came for a long stay, and so Husna would live in better quarters than ever before in her life, with uninterrupted supplies of good food, servants who more or less did her bidding, and occasional use of the car. To Husna it felt like a validation, almost like revenge, and yet with the bitterness of triumph after humiliation.

Husna simply disappeared from the house in Gulberg. Begum Harouni learned of her departure from the servants. The old lady stormed in to see her husband but found him impervious to her outrage.

“I’ll never take that little . . . *thing* back into my house,” said Begum Harouni. “Imagine! I picked her from the dirt, from nothing, and I fed and clothed her.”

“It reflects well upon you, my dear,” responded K.K. placidly.

Husna brought over her shabby luggage to the house on Danepur Lane, a brown suitcase bulging and strapped. She had clothes and shoes, not much else, arriving in a rickshaw, the facts soon communicated through the house among the snickering community, washermen, drivers, sweepers, household servants. After Begum Harouni had gone on the pilgrimage Husna asked K.K. for the use of the car, and went back to the house. At first the butler, Chacha Latif, would not let her in, but Husna raised her voice and became abusive, and the servant, knowing that she might later be in a position to injure him, let her do what she wanted. All the closets had been locked, but she found a few of her things, a pile of Indian movie magazines, a little dish with an image of the Eiffel Tower that her grandfather brought home from a European tour in the 1920s. When she went out, she found K.K.’s driver speaking with Chacha Latif.

“What does he say?” said Husna to the driver as they returned along Jail Road, driving in and out of shadow under flame-of-the-forest trees planted a hundred years ago.

“Nothing, Bibi,” said Samundar Khan.

“Nothing? Not anything at all?” replied Husna, speaking in sharp Punjabi. And then, leaning back in the seat, patronizingly, “You drivers are always the clever ones.”

• • •

A week after she moved into the annex, Husna slept with K. K. Harouni. He had visitors for lunch, a State Bank governor, another old civil service friend, and his cousin, the retired General Karim, along with their wives. They took lunch in the

room known as “the White Verandah,” shaded by a pipul tree and overlooking a little side garden. Already, in early April, the ceiling fans barely kept the room cool. Husna remained in the annex, reading a dull and badly printed history of the Sikh Wars, in which K.K.’s ancestors fought, then set it aside. Though she wanted to make herself interesting to the old man, reading serious books, she never finished what she began, instead lapsing into daydreams or reading secondhand fashion magazines that she bought from a used book stall. A servant boy brought her a tray of food, the same food that the cook served to K.K. and his guests.

From her perch in the rooms above the garage Husna watched the guests emerge into the portico, continue speaking to Harouni for what seemed to her an interminable period, then drive away. Soon afterward, a servant came to ask Husna if she would join Harouni for green tea in the garden. She walked past the formal dining room and along a corridor hung with darkened portraits of his ancestors and with photographs of him and his family in the first half of the century. She felt intimidated by this house, by its heavy gloomy air, which contrasted with K.K.’s light manner, and looked almost uncomprehendingly upon the strange and numerous objects scattered about, the ivory scabbard of a Chinese sword, a carved walnut love seat from Kashmir, numerous brass and copper figurines of Hindu gods. The house smelled of dusty carpets and disinfectant and wood polish. K.K. sat under a tree in an old railway chair, with two cups of green tea on a table. She took one and sat down.

“Hello, girl,” he said, pleased to see her, fed and mellow. “How lovely it is.” Old trees were scattered around the receding lawn, creating areas of shade where the grass wouldn’t grow. A row of mulberry trees just ripening at the far end attracted sugar-heavy bees, which sipped the purple berries hanging from the branches and littering the ground. Overhead, in the bleached sky, kites and vultures wheeled at a great height on the afternoon thermals, as if the sky itself were slowly turning.

Draining the tea, he said, “Well, my dear, it’s time for my rest.”

“Let me massage you, Uncle,” she suggested, blushing. Though her ambition always tolled in the background, she had come to respect him genuinely, his unstudied fairness, his gaiety, his integrity and openness, plain and light and valuable as a metal unknown in her world. She wanted to keep her part of the bargain, and had only herself to give. It hurt her that it was so little; she imagined that her body, her virtue, meant almost nothing to her.

She followed him into his bedroom. Rafik had already closed the curtains and laid out his pajamas.

“You needn’t wake me,” he said to Rafik, who stood by the door and who knew very well the routine to be observed on such an afternoon.

Of course she was a virgin, and that touched him. Letting him do exactly as he wanted, throughout she wore a look in her eyes that he misunderstood as surprise and shyness, and later identified with moods that verged on madness—sequences of perplexity and focus in her eyes, expressing her hooded rage to get what she wanted. She had expected this to be as simple as the signing of a check, a payment. Instead, for a moment the romantic girl awoke, who would have accepted another man, one her own age, from her own station.

Goodbye to the life she would never have, a life she despised, economies that she would never make as she cooked and kept house for a clerking husband in the Old City, one of the boys who might have accepted her hand. She and that husband might have gone away, might have moved out to the new suburbs of Lahore—the ones out past Model Town, grids of streets laid out in wheat fields or untended orchards, no houses yet built. The moment with K. K. meant a great deal to her, but not in the way that he understood it—without meaning to, she had given herself completely. She could pretend later to be a virgin; or someone would take her even knowing she wasn't. A marriage could always be arranged, it was always a bargain, a deal. But she knew then that she wouldn't have another man, because any man after this would have to be a compromise, a salary man.

Late in the afternoon she put on her clothes, languid and shy in her movements, and slipped away to the annex. This nap became their routine.

When he had no guests, K.K. ate lunch with Husna. Rafik served the food with care, the dishes on from the left, off from the right, the napkins starched and arranged like a fan by the plate. In May now the air-conditioning had been turned on. In this room, the coolest in the house, Husna felt most intimidated. She sat at his right, at the far end of the long table that could seat eighteen, and spoke little. Over the past month she had learned which utensils to use, but still did not use them gracefully. K.K. chewed his food exactly ten times before swallowing.

As Rafik brought in a cheese soufflé one afternoon, a car drove into the portico behind K.K. He had his back to the window and did not turn. They heard the creaking of the carved swinging doors, taken from K.K.'s ancestral home in the Old City, and then the visitor, a middle-aged woman, pushed into the dining room.

"Hello, Daddy," she said. "Isn't this cozy!" She had a tinkling laugh which, while it did not seem entirely genuine, by its musicality caused the hearer to join her in a heightened response, like a painting that one knows to be good, although unmoved by it.

K.K. rose, seeming suddenly frail and old next to her vivid personality, and kissed his youngest daughter on the forehead.

"Hello, darling. When did you get in?"

“Just now, on the eleven o’clock flight. I’m here because Pinky’s daughter got secretly engaged. Don’t ask!”

They sat down, including Husna, who had also risen.

“This is Husna,” said K.K., “Mian Nasiruddin’s daughter.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” said Sarwat maliciously, looking not at Husna’s face but at her person, hunched across the table. “I met her at Mummy’s.”

Rafik brought in a mat and laid a place for Sarwat. “Good lord, Rafik,” she commented, rearranging the cutlery, “you’re getting even fatter.”

Sarwat settled back into her chair. She wore an understated tan sari, a gold watch, several unusual rings, a star sapphire and a Burmese pigeon-blood ruby. Her salt-and-pepper hair, worn up in a high chignon, lengthened her still beautiful face; and her slender manicured body suggested lotions and expensive soaps, a hairdresser and a masseuse, idleness and ease. In all she looked rich and sleek and voluptuous. Even at fifty she still had admirers, and it had become a convention among the circle in which she moved to speak of her lovely gray eyes.

“I am very glad to meet you,” said Husna. “I have heard so much about you.” Her head had sunk into her shoulders.

Sarwat looked down at the girl with a wolfish grin, almost spoke, then turned to her father. “You look well, Daddy.”

He had resumed eating, and with his mouth full, raised a fork, as if to say, You can see for yourself.

“Tell me, what do you know about the Talpur boy, the son of Bilqis Talpur? Mumtaz went off and got engaged to him, and Pinky’s absolutely livid. That’s why she called me here. I can only stay for a minute, I told her I’d be at her house just after lunch.”

K.K., who took these matters seriously, put down his fork. “I spent time with his grandfather when I was posted to Leiah. The old man had a bit of a temper, and of course you know about the father. You should speak to Wali, the boy was at Aitchison with him, a year before or a year after.”

Husna broke in. “He is very handsome.”

Sarwat looked at her in amazement, as if the furniture had spoken. “Tell me about the land,” she said to her father.

“It’s good land, on the river. The family used to hold a big parcel near the city, and that would be enormously valuable.” He looked at her, raising a warning eyebrow. “But then they say that Adnan spent the last thirty years drinking it away.”

Finishing the meal, they rose to have green tea in the living room.

As they stood, Sarwat said to Husna, “I’d like to be alone with my father, please,” and then proceeded through the door without waiting for a reply.

K.K. followed her into the living room. Sarwat sat down on a sofa and tucked her

feet under herself, leaning against a large pillow. “Really, Daddy,” she began. “I can imagine keeping her around, but to sit and have lunch with her, that’s too much. You’re becoming eccentric, you really are.”

“She comes from a good family,” said K.K. “Her great-grandfather owned more land than yours. But for a few twists of fate she might be in your place, and we might be living still in the Old City.”

“But we’re not,” said Sarwat. “That’s the point, we’re not.” She tried another tack. “And what can you possibly find to say to her? Sheherezad told me she came for tea the other day, and that this unfortunate little thing sat without saying a word, just listening, like a frog in the corner. It’s indecent.”

“She too would have wished for your advantages, my dear, your schools and clothes and friends and property.”

“Please, Daddy. I doubt if this is a humanitarian mission.”

“And I’m lonely, Sarwat. You’re in Karachi, Kamila is in New York, and Rehana hasn’t even spoken with me in ten years. My friends are dying off or don’t go out anymore. She keeps me company. She’s no genius, if you like, but she can play cards and so on. Why don’t you spend more time in Lahore? You have a lovely house here, friends here. I would much prefer to see you than her, but you’re not available.”

“What about Riffat or one of your other old girlfriends? Why choose someone like this, she’s neither pretty nor presentable.”

“At my age, what I need is companionship, and Husna can give that to me. Riffat can only come for tea or for a few hours, but Husna is here whenever I need her.”

They sat back in silence, neither satisfied with the other. After a few moments, Sarwat put down her cup. “Daddy, I must go. I’ll come this evening. Please, at least tell her not to come out when I’m here.”

That afternoon when Husna entered his room, summoned from the annex, K.K. felt abashed, creating a tightness in his face and causing his mouth to become dry. Irresistibly drawn to the one subject that he wished to avoid, he said, “It’s wonderful to see Sarwat. I hope you and she will get to know each other.” He had been sitting on the edge of the bed, and now he rolled over, tucked himself under the sheet, and put a black mask over his eyes, to screen out the light.

Snarling, her face contorted, she exploded. “She’s mean and rude. She treated me like dirt.” Husna’s seething voice broke, out of control, pouring from her. “Why don’t you get her to come live in the annex and to play cards with you and make your tea?”

“I can’t have you speak like this,” said K.K., removing the mask, face drawn and imposing. “You’re upsetting me.” He spoke in a measured voice. “You’ve upset me.”

“I’m leaving this house,” she said, standing up on the bed, looking down at him. “I gave you everything I had, but you give me nothing in return. I have feelings too, I’m human. She made me feel like dirt, and you didn’t say anything to stop her.” She began to cry hysterically, still standing on the bed, and when he sat up and tried to touch her leg she shrieked and stepped back. “Even the servants here treat me as if I’m nothing. When I ask for things they tell me that they don’t have time. I have to crawl even in front of them. Yesterday Hassan swore at me.”

“I’ll speak with him,” said K.K. “Now stop. You know the doctor’s orders. Do you want me to have another heart attack?”

She saw that she dare push him no further, and so gradually became quiet. Lying down on the bed, she wouldn’t get under the covers, but held herself rigidly beside him.

When K.K. woke Husna said, “Talk to Hassan now. I won’t stand the servants’ treatment of me anymore.” Knowing she couldn’t at this point win the larger battle, against Sarwat, she wanted at least to consolidate her smaller gains. She insisted that K.K. speak to Hassan in front of her, though he would have preferred not to humiliate the old servant.

The grizzled cook stood with his shoes off, having left them at the door, and with his lambskin hat clutched in his hand. He looked down at the floor, at his splayed bare feet planted on the polished rosewood parquet.

“Bibi says that yesterday you swore at her.”

Husna had been waiting for some concrete provocation and had pounced when Hassan, in his habitual foul temper, called her a bitch under his breath.

“Yes sir,” said the old cook. “I mean no sir.”

“Well, Hassan, did you or didn’t you?”

“No sir.”

Husna became shrill, which injured her cause. “I asked him not to put chilies in the omelet, and he swore at me. Ask the sweepress, she heard.”

Hassan looked at her squarely. “You and the sweepress.”

“You can go,” said Harouni, not raising his voice.

When Hassan had left, Harouni said to Rafik, who had been impassively watching this performance, “See that this doesn’t happen anymore.”

Husna gloated from the sidelines. Rafik responded without expression, “Yes, Mian Sahib.” He paused. “Shah Sahib is here. Should I send him into the living room?”

While she knew that now at least the old servants would be decided against her, Husna felt she could afford their ill will, for her position in the household grew stronger daily. The attitude of the servants changed after Rafik gave them the word. Only a few, the old ones, covered their insolence with glacial politeness, while the younger became either servile or friendly to the point of taking liberties, thinking thereby to win her favor.

Husna began to enjoy the advantages of her new position. The secretary, Shah Sahib, handled the household accounts, writing up all the expenses in a complicated double-entry bookkeeping system, so complicated in fact that K.K. couldn't and wouldn't take the trouble to understand it. For years the books had been larded with excessive expenses. The drivers, Hassan the cook, all of the others except Rafik, lavishly inflated the bills they submitted. After Husna had a few times complained of not having money, of wearing torn clothes and broken-heeled shoes, K.K. instructed that she should be given a tiny allowance. In old age he had become tightfisted, although the household hemorrhaged money, and he spent two or three hundred thousand rupees a month without knowing where it went. Shah Sahib soon enlisted Husna in his system, since he didn't want her to begin making inquiries, as women in a household have a tendency to do; and so her allowance monthly grew larger and larger, inflated in various ingenious ways.

She had the use of a car, bought herself clothes, even small bits of gold jewelry. In her rooms she kept one, then two locked steel trunks, which she filled with everything from raw silk to electric sandwich makers. She would come to K.K. with some special request, wanting to buy something, and he would ultimately agree. She wheedled, petted him, became frosty, became nice. Giving in, he would be unable to look her in the eye, himself embarrassed. She said to him, speaking plainly, "Scratch a man and find a boy."

A few of K.K.'s old gentleman friends, mild landowners with courtly Punjabi manners, came to the decision that they had no reason for isolating the young girl. They called her "daughter" and looked forward to her lively, flirtatious company. Among this group, who now in old age constituted K.K.'s closest friends, he had always been the fast one, the sportsman and lover. They envied him the possession of Husna, while at the same time being slightly relieved on reaching their lugubrious houses after a few hours in her company. Her striving wore on them. She flattered them, asked about their harmless projects—a Union of Punjabi Landowners, a pipe-dream society for tort reform—and so wielded them into a circle, with herself at the center. She teased them, sitting at Harouni's side during bridge games, and would try to peek at his opponents' cards. Playing rummy for small stakes with whoever was dummy in the bridge game, she cheated, and when caught laughed and denied it.

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The air conditioner in the annex didn't work properly, and on that pretext Husna moved into a study adjoining the master bedroom, with communicating doors. This new proximity proved at times inconvenient for Husna, because it exposed her use of sleeping pills to K.K., who strongly disapproved. For several years she had found it difficult to sleep at night. Her mind raced during episodes of hysteria, when she barely could govern herself, and so she had developed a dependency on sleeping pills, which were available from the pharmacies without any prescription. Occasionally, desiring complete oblivion, she would take a double dose—it was almost a game with her, a flirtation with the dangers of the pills. She did not sleep the night with K.K., but invariably at some point withdrew to her own room, saying that his tossing movements disturbed her. Sometimes in the morning, when she had taken a stronger dose, she didn't answer when the servant knocked at her door, and then K.K. would himself come and shake her, wearing his pajamas and an old silk robe. He would look down at her sleeping face, in repose and therefore cleansed of all ambition and anxiety and spite, qualities that he forgave her because he felt that the conditions into which he had thrust her brought them out. Seeing her there, he sometimes thought that he loved her, loved her brightness in these last years of his life, when he had become so lonely. Old General Hadayatullah, the retired chief medical officer of the army, had told K.K. that his heart might at any moment carry him away. K.K. feared death with all the terror of a perfectly rational man, who took no comfort in religion, and knew death to be his final end. He wanted so much to live!

Gradually Husna would wake, late in the morning, and K.K. would hurry to her room.

“Suppose something happened to me in the night?” he asked, as she sipped her tea, lying in bed, her face drained and pale. She looked prettiest then, emerging from drugged sleep, erased.

She would cry and ask him not to speak of such things, and at those moments he felt that she too genuinely loved him, something that he often doubted, despite her professions of love. He craved her presence and reproached himself with a phrase that he once repeated even to her: *Too old to be roused by pleasure, I seek pain.*

In August the monsoon broke. The rains came up from India, sweeping the Himalayas, filling the rivers of the Punjab, pouring down water on the Hindu Kush and on the plain that extends from the Khyber to Karachi. In the gardens outside

K.K.'s room, crows sat in the dripping branches of ancient trees, bedraggled, and the lawns filled with water.

One night the bell in the servants' quarters rang, and Rafik rose, dressed, and hurried to K.K.'s room. The master sat up in bed, in the glare of the single light.

"Something's wrong," he said. "My pulse is racing. Wake Husna."

Husna came into the room, wiping her face, adjusting her clothes.

"What is it, Uncle?"

"Telephone General Hadayatullah. It's my chest."

K.K. sat in the bed, scared, his face thin and worn, and distracted himself with meaningless banter, falling into Husna's mode of speech, which had become for them a private language.

"So, Bibi, for a while you won't be plucking me clean at rummy. Or they'll give me bedrest, we'll play even more, and soon you'll have salted away a nice fat dowry." In the past he would have found this kind of joking in poor taste. He had begun teasing her, saying that she was seeking a young husband—leaving him—and almost convincing himself that she was. In fact, as he mimicked her brassy manners and slang, saying in joke what couldn't be said outright, she steadily drew him onto her own ground, where she could engage and control him so much more effectively.

Servants had crowded into the hallway outside the room, perhaps twenty of them, barefoot and speaking in whispers, coming into the house by ones or twos as they learned that something had happened to the master.

The general swept in, a tall anglicized officer, his trimmed mustache and even the cut of his slightly military clothes reflecting purpose. Rafik, who knew the general well, brought a stool. Administering an ECG on a portable machine, the general took the tape to the light, and said, "Go immediately to Mayo Hospital. Carry him out in a chair." He very precisely clicked shut the lid of the machine and put the tape away in the pocket of his vest, wearing a thoughtful expression.

For a moment Husna and K.K. looked at each other, his face lined and grave, hers puffy with sleep. For the first time he thought of her as a grown-up, as a woman; and for the first time she thought of him as a lover, sick and possibly dying. All the servants, the gardeners, the chauffeurs, the junior ones who saw K.K. only from a distance, wanted to help carry the chair through the corridors of the house, where only a few lights burned, throwing shadows. K.K. sat impassively on the chair, raised above the crowd, then lowered at the doors, like an awkward king, a king onstage.

As Husna prepared to get into the car, the general stopped her. "You need to be here. People will be coming to ask about him. He's probably going to be all right, but you should call Sarwat and the others. Kamila should come back from New

York. Have them call Rehana also.” Rehana, the middle child, had broken with K.K. when he separated from his wife. Husna began to cry, shaking, and he stood back and looked at her shrewdly. “Don’t, this isn’t about you. Prepare yourself now. Remember who you are.”

• • •

By midmorning people had begun to call at the house, friends of the family, for in Lahore word traveled quickly. Husna received them, sitting in the living room. She had dressed up too much, wearing an embroidered black *kurta*. Several of the guests asked pointedly about the daughters.

Sarwat had ordered that a car wait at the airport and meet each flight from Karachi, as she would get a seat as quickly as possible. Just before lunch she came through the door into the living room, narrowing her eyes. An elderly couple, who had been sitting with Husna, stood up.

“What’s happened?” she asked, addressing Husna. “What are you doing here? Where’s Daddy?”

Husna explained. The old couple quickly took their leave.

“Please,” said Sarwat, “this is a time for family. I’ve asked my cousin Bilqis to come here and receive people. Go up to your room and stay there.”

Husna didn’t dare tell Sarwat that she had moved next to the master bedroom. A servant turned on the air conditioner in the annex, and all day Husna stayed there, sitting on a chair and looking down through the window at callers arriving and leaving. Hassan sent up some food, but she didn’t eat. She knew she would not be allowed to attend K.K. at the hospital.

In the middle of the night she fell asleep, still sitting in the chair by the window. Suddenly waking in the morning, she looked down on the driveway jammed with cars, the line of them running all the way out to the massive gates of the compound. Not even putting on a head scarf, she ran down the stairs and into the servants’ area. Rafik sat on a chair sobbing unnaturally, as if racked with coughing, his head in his hands, his elbows on his knees. She saw very distinctly the old man’s bare head, bowed down, the gray thin hairs, the scalp. She knew, of course, that K.K. had died. Two other servants, young ones new to the house, sat uncertainly on their haunches nearby. They looked at her with curiosity, but said nothing. She turned, her eyes filling with tears, and walked out and up into the annex, into the cooled rooms overlooking the driveway, shaded by tree branches. She lay down on the bed, her feelings concentrated at the forefront of her mind like an immensely weighted black point, incomprehensible. She felt afraid to cry aloud, to draw attention.

In Islam a body must be buried as soon as possible, ideally before nightfall. When Husna emerged from her bedroom and looked again out onto the drive, she saw men putting up a tent, where the male guests would sit to mourn during the *jenaza*. The women would sit inside the house with the body. Among the things that she had not carried over to her room in the main house, Husna found a suit of clothing that she brought with her when she came into the household, a cheap *shalvar* and *kurta*, with a simple white head scarf. Wearing this costume, she entered the packed living room. The body of K. K. Harouni lay on the floor, wrapped in a white cloth, his jaw bound closed with a white bandage, the knot tied jauntily near one ear. His dentures had been lost, and so his cheeks had caved in. His body had shrunken, lying among rose petals scattered there by the servants. Sarwat stood up from her place at the head of the corpse, touched Husna on the head with both hands, but said nothing. Husna went to the back of the room and sat down as far away as possible from K.K.'s old wife, who was telling a rosary, a stunned expression on her face. All sorts of women had come, women from all phases of K.K.'s life, and kept arriving, clicking under the portico and through the front vestibule in high heels, spilling out into other rooms. From various places soft or loud sobbing would break out and then subside, as is the custom. Two society women sat uncomfortably on the floor next to Husna, whispering, gossiping, and she heard one say to the other in English, "Oh, isn't that *delicious*."

Of course you don't care, thought Husna, who wouldn't cry in front of them. She felt that only she truly cared, that she had lost more than all the others.

And yet she wanted to be like them, they were what she had lost.

For the next two days Husna stayed in the annex, without once going out. People came day and night to condole with Sarwat and Kamila. Rehana, the estranged third daughter, had arrived from Paris, where she taught some esoteric form of Islamic women's studies—but she pointedly stayed with her mother rather than at K.K.'s house. Husna felt that they had forgotten her, and she wanted to be forgotten, to stay here alone in these rooms, with rush mats on the floor, bits of scavenged furniture, and an air conditioner that almost kept the apartment cool, that dribbled water onto the pavement below. On the third day a servant came, early in the morning, before there were any callers, to say that the sisters wished to speak with her. They waited for her in the living room, all three wearing saris, relaxed, Kamila sitting with her feet curled under her on a sofa, Rehana and Sarwat in high-backed chairs.

They got straight to the point, Kamila, as the eldest, speaking.

"My father allowed you to live in this house. However, he would not have wanted you to stay here. Tomorrow afternoon the car will be available to take you wherever you wish to be taken. I suppose you'll go to your father's house. There will be no discussion on the subject." She settled back, finished with the problem.

Husna, who had taken a seat halfway through this monologue, though she had not been invited to do so, looked down at the floor. Tears welled up in her eyes.

“Did Uncle say anything about me before . . . before . . . ?”

Sarwat broke in. “No,” she replied with finality. “There was and is nothing for you.”

“That isn’t what I meant,” said Husna.

Kamila softened. “Look, whatever you had with my father is gone now. If you took care of him in these past months, you were rewarded. You’re young, you’ll find other things. You think that you’ll never heal, but you will, sooner than you think. Go on, go back to the annex.”

Now Husna stood. She had reached the bottom, her pride arose, her sense of wanting to be dignified now, to accept the inevitable. For her, dignity and pride and memory would be all and everything from this moment forward. “I have no power. You are important people, and I’m nothing, and my family is nothing. I have to obey.” The finality of this rang true, the absence of appeal, countering their dismissal of her.

Just as she approached the door, Rehana called to her. “There’s one other thing. They tell us you have a number of trunks in your room. We will not ask what you have in them. You may take those with you. But nothing else.”

Reaching the annex, staggered, Husna sat on the side of the bed and buried her face in her hands. She had hoped that Rehana, the foreign one, the aggrieved one, would take her side—yet it was she who pronounced the harshest words. At the end their estrangements were less than their contempt for her. They had closed up against her—family, blood. She tried to tell herself that she had gone to the sisters hoping for nothing, with nothing in her heart but sadness at the death of their father, who had loved her. She should have said something cold, should have refused their last insulting offer.

“For him I should have said, ‘I came with nothing, I leave with nothing. I leave with the clothes on my back. I served your father, when you were far away. The shame be on your heads.’”

But she could not afford even this gesture. The next day two men loaded the trunks onto a horse-drawn cart and carried them away to the Old City.

This story is included in the author’s published collection of short stories (*In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009) and has been reproduced here with the permission of the author and his publishers.

The Wealth of Pakistan

By Sharon Hawley

*Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet.*

W. B. Yeats

A poor man, a poet
with only dreams
spreads them down
beneath his lover's feet
urging gently:

*Tread softly because
you tread on my dreams*

Impoverished poets and billionaires
equal under dreamy dots
all rich with starry nights

Town comes dark around him
but diamond bright above
he walks a moonless path
in a park called Pahari Chock

His town is called Faisalabad
the size of Pasadena
noctivagant, a nighttime walker
gazing up as much as down

Less able to pollute the night
with artificial light, for him
blue-dim embroidery
sets in silent silver Milky Way

While any park in Pasadena
blots out the sky with comfort
For me the wealth is mostly stolen
swept away in electric haze

His, the flame of cavemen
paintings of the gods and myths
ever since sparks of consciousness
ignited human brains

For him their light still flares
he stares with ancient eyes
ponders mathematics
myth and science from the source

while from my brightly lighted street
I read them from my books
Faisalabad is brighter, richer
studded diamond in the night

The Crow

By Rizwan Akhtar

Death was the midwife that delivered Crow.
Rand Brandes

Walking in the lazy drizzle
I saw the carcass of a crow
pouched in a tuft of grass
legs uplifted
a cargo turned upside down,
ovalish totem
bobbed into a ripped rugby ball
and stiffened into a taxidermists' fancy,
while the beak had gone still,
a question mark
asking me to move on,
I threw a glance around, complicit
in this causality,
the world should have been a museum
for such fossils lying unattended
on the road,
wet with simmering English rain
that crow was not black enough,
not like ours' back home
it had other feathers too
not like the one
we have in the droning hot afternoons
of Lahore
where sun bakes the birds
in its eternal oven—
so I rubbed my eyes

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like the wipers working on the wind screen
and hurried on.

Walking Home

By Masood Ashraf Raja

(Occasioned by the 2008-09 Israeli bombing of Gaza)

Like three dolls in a toy bed
One girl, two little boys
With peaceful faces, eyes closed
No wounds, no blood—a clean death

The girl, a smile etched on her face
Dreaming, probably, of a better place
The boys, holding hands, unsmiling
Like guardian angels walking their sister home:

Through bombed streets of the walled city
Jumping over trash, avoiding piss and blood
Through ranks of soldiers, columns of tanks
Breathing gunpowder, smoke, phosphorous

Carrying their sister across the wall
To a city of light, cafes, and pristine streets
They stop in front of a candy store
Silent, hopeful, cautious, a bit afraid

Then one of them, the one in blue jeans
A white t-shirt and a black baseball hat,
Enters, after wiping his feet on the door mat
In his stretched hand a Jordanian coin

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Found in a dusty Gaza street, right
By the deserted, defunct Bus stop.
Sir, he says to the man in the candy store
Sir, my sister would like an orange drop.

HOSHRUBA: The Land and the Tilism

Translated by Musharraf Ali Farooqi

MUHAMMAD HUSAIN JAH

HOSHRUBA

Book One

THE LAND AND THE TILISM

A First Translation of the World's First Magical Fantasy Epic

Tilism-e Hoshruha

Translated from the Urdu with an Introduction and Notes by

MUSHARRAF ALI FAROOQI

HOSHRUBA: An Introduction

Imagine a tall mountain reaching into the skies; at the foot of it a large army of readers is gathered – you among them. You hear a loud, thunderous beat. It's me on kettledrums. From where you stand in the crowd you can barely see me. But you hear the beat loud and clear – what with all the mountain acoustics, and also because I strike the drums very loudly.

You and all the others are gathered for a long, perilous campaign. On the other side of the mountain lies the land of an all-powerful tale – the one you must conquer. It has consumed whole generations of readers before you. And like all great tales, it is still hungry – ravenous, in fact – for more. You may not return from this campaign, or you may come back so hardened you may never look at stories in quite the same way again. But these are not the only challenges.

The path leading to the heart of this tale is through a dark terrain laid with archaic language and craggy metaphors, strewn with ornate word puzzles that are a challenge to solve. Not many have gone across in the last hundred years. But the tale will not die or be forgotten. It only gets hungrier and hungrier for readers. In the night, when people open up their bedside books, it roars with a terrible challenge, “*ARE THERE ANY WHO ARE MY MATCH?*”

Should you now wish to listen, here's the story of this tale. It speaks of what this tale is, where it came from, and who created it. By telling you this story, I do

not mean to delay you. By all means, advance and come back to me later, or never, if you like that better. I, for one, never read “introductions” first. I believe stories should be read without pompous fellows like me interrupting readers. I give this information by way of anecdote only because the account of this tale’s origins is a fantasy in itself and, like you, I too am fond of a good story.

Know then, that from 1883–1893 in Lucknow, India, two rival storytellers, Muhammad Husain Jah and Ahmed Husain Qamar, wrote a fantasy in the Urdu language whose equal has not been heard before or since. It was called *Tilism-e Hoshruha* and it was over eight thousand pages long. This tale had been passed down to them – or so everyone thought – from storytellers going back hundreds of years.

But in truth, the *Tilism-e Hoshruha* was a monstrously elaborate literary hoax perpetrated by a small, tightly-knit group of storytellers from an earlier generation. How long it had been in preparation is not known. A story of such magnitude must have been in the making for many years. We know at least two generations of storytellers who were involved in the enterprise. The names of several men who propagated it most actively in their time have come down to us.

By the time *Tilism-e Hoshruha* appeared in print, everyone believed that it belonged to the cycle of tales of *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*, which could be traced back in India to the court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605).

The Adventures of Amir Hamza originated in Arabia in the seventh century to commemorate the brave deeds of Prophet Muhammad’s uncle, Amir Hamza. In the course of its travels in the Middle East and Central Asia, this story incorporated many local fictions and histories and became an entirely fictitious legend. Then, sometime between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries, *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* found its way to India.

Emperor Akbar took a particular liking to this tale. He not only enjoyed its narration, but in 1562 he also commissioned an illustrated album of the legend. It took fifteen years to complete and is considered the most ambitious project ever undertaken by the royal Mughal studio. Each of its fourteen hundred, large-sized illustrations depicted one episode and was accompanied by mnemonic text in Persian – the court language – to aid the storyteller. Only ten per cent of these illustrations survived, but the royal patronage popularized the story and the Indian storytellers developed it into an oral tale franchise.

Oral tales had been told in India for thousands of years. Ultimately, every story tells of some event, but what storytellers choose to tell of the event and how they approach it is determined by the genre in which it is told. *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* was told in India in the *dastan* genre, which is of Persian origin. How-

ever, over hundreds of years, a distinctive Indo-Islamic *dastan* emerged in India that was informed by the cultural universe in which it developed.

In the nineteenth century, three hundred years after *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* found a foothold in the Mughal Empire, it was narrated in the Urdu language in two different *dastan* traditions. The first was a short legend, which recounted all the events preceding Amir Hamza's birth: the adventures that made him a hero, the details of his eighteen-year-long stay in the mythical land of Mount Qaf, and the events that followed his return to Earth, and his martyrdom.

The second *dastan* tradition was much longer, loosely arranged and of a more complex nature. It not only included Amir Hamza's adventures but also the exploits of his sons and grandsons. The martyrdom was postponed. Through telling and retelling, the storytellers enlarged the existing episodes and continuously added new details and adventures.

Meanwhile, a group of Lucknow storytellers had become disenchanted with the Amir Hamza legend and its regular fare of *jinns* (genies), giants, *devs* (demons), *peris* (fairies), and *gao-sars* (cow-headed creatures). Most of these elements were borrowed from Arabian and Persian folklore. The few token man-eaters and sorcerers thrown into the mix were found to be rather boring.

These storytellers strongly felt that the Amir Hamza story needed an injection of local talent – magic fauna and evil spirits, black magic, white magic, alpha sorcerers and sorceresses. All of them were in plentiful supply in India and would give the story the much needed boost. Moreover, some of these sorcerers had to be True Believers. Islamic history was chock-full of all kinds of occult arts and artists. A thousand camel loads of treatises had been written on the occult arts in Arabic, Persian and Urdu. Many renowned sorcerers were household names. It would be a shame to let that occult heritage go to waste.

But the storytellers were clear about one thing. The course had to be changed without rocking the boat. The proposed story had to remain a tale related to *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* – the brand that was their bread and butter. As long as the audience understood that the tale was a part of that famous cycle of tales, the storyteller would not lack an audience.

The godfather of this group of conspirators – and the likely mastermind of the planned hoax – was a Lucknow master storyteller, Mir Ahmed Ali. He sat down to prepare a fantasy tale that would have all of these ingredients, and more.

In the longer Amir Hamza cycle, every adventure began with a token mischief monger starting trouble in some place. Amir Hamza took it upon himself to fix it, and when he was finished, the mischief monger escaped elsewhere to create trouble anew. When one villain was defeated, another took his place. Amir Hamza dutifully followed and carried forward the storytellers' oral franchise. The audience

only needed the most basic information about Amir Hamza, his companions and the past events to enjoy a new episode.

Mir Ahmed Ali was well acquainted with this structure and decided to exploit it. When he looked around for a mischief monger to start his tale, his eyes fell upon one of Amir Hamza's more celebrated enemies, Zamarrud Shah Bakhtari, alias Laqa. In fact, it would have been difficult to miss Laqa. He was a giant.

In the surviving leaves of Emperor Akbar's Amir Hamza illustrations we find some fine pictorial representations of Laqa. In one of my favorite illustrations, he is flying in the clouds astride a magic clay urn. He is accompanied by his cohorts, some of whom are playing bugles, cymbals, trumpets, and kettledrums. The fair-skinned Laqa with his long, flowing, pearl-strung beard, has a meditative look on his face. One day I measured him with my ballpoint pen, using his human cohorts as a rough scale. According to my calculations, Laqa came out of Emperor Akbar's studio some twenty feet tall. It is important to remember this figure because we will be referring to it again shortly.

At the end of one of Amir Hamza's pre-existing tales, Laqa was defeated and pursued by Amir Hamza's armies. Mir Ahmed Ali saw his opportunity and scooped it up: his story would begin right at the point where Amir Hamza was chasing the giant.

Next, Mir Ahmed Ali used occult arts of the Islamic world as his inspiration to create a magical world called a tilism, which is created by a sorcerer by infusing inanimate things with the spirit of planetary and cosmic forces. Once an inanimate thing becomes a tilism it appears in an illusory guise and performs supernatural functions assigned to it by the sorcerer. Tilisms can be small or large depending on their structure or the complexity of the formula used in creating them.

Now, tilisms had been present in *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* since Emperor Akbar's times. But they were shabby little things. Sometimes they were in the shape of a domed building atop which sat a bird of some kind. If someone shot down the bird, the tilism was conquered. Sometimes it was a visual illusion that had to be ignored, or a physical trap that must be avoided. At best, tilisms were small tracts of land that had some magical property assigned to them. This, and other such uninteresting stuff, had been sold in the name of tilism to this point.

But Mir Ahmed Ali thought up a tilism that would be a whole country and contain other tilisms within it. Its original founder sorcerers would be True Believers and the tilism would have an unalterable fate. The ruler of the tilism would be the powerful sorcerer Afrasiyab, titled the Master of the Tilism. With a sorceress empress, he would rule over a vast number of sorcerers and sorceresses. But having a wife would not keep the sorcerer emperor from lusting after other princesses and carrying on an affair with a beautiful boy. Because the emperor of sorcerers was a

usurper, his empire would be filled with treachery and palace intrigues. And, most important of all, he would have an ongoing border feud with a neighboring tilism and its equally powerful sorcerer emperor.

Anything less complicated would have been an affront to Mir Ahmed Ali's imagination.

Such a dazzling, mind-and-socks-blowing tilism had to have an equally magnificent name. Mir Ahmed Ali decided on Hoshruba (*hosh* = senses, *ru* = ravishing, stealing). And with that, he had the title for his story: *Tilism-e Hoshruba* or the Tilism of Hoshruba.

Mir Ahmed Ali parked the fleeing giant Laqa in a land neighboring Hoshruba. Amir Hamza and his army followed and landed nearby. But the story was not about Laqa or Amir Hamza. The main action was set in Hoshruba. One of Amir Hamza's sons was sent out hunting. He trespassed the boundaries of Hoshruba and killed one of the guardian sorcerers running on all fours in the shape of a fawn. The Emperor of Sorcerers decided to teach the prince a lesson. When Amir Hamza's camp raised noises, the emperor responded in kind. Amir Hamza sent for his diviners to figure out what to do next. They declared that the fate of Hoshruba was tied to Amir Hamza's grandson, Prince Asad, who would conquer the tilism with the help of five tricksters. With that, the scene was all set for action. And before we know it a campaign is launched to conquer Hoshruba.

Prince Asad enters Hoshruba with a large army and great preparations but in no time he is stripped of all that paraphernalia and left standing with only the clothes on his back. It turns out that he is completely useless in the tilism. The trickster Amar Ayyar, his four trickster companions and their newfound friend, the rebel sorceress Mahrukh Magic-Eye, must make war on the Emperor of Hoshruba, Afrasiyab. Amir Hamza watches from the sidelines and periodically indulges in cosmetic battles with Laqa and his minions lest the audience forget they are listening to a story from the Amir Hamza cycle of tales. But in a symbolic manner, the story has gotten rid of the Amir Hamza legend as soon as Prince Asad is rendered ineffective upon entering Hoshruba. He will remain a figurehead with only a ceremonial presence.

Mir Ahmed Ali wanted to make *Hoshruba* the most sharp-clawed, shiny-scaled tale in the whole of the Amir Hamza cycle so he liberally poured in vicious sorceresses, nubile trickster girls, powerful wizards and dreaded monsters and stirred the tale with non-stop action. In that process, Mir Ahmed Ali transcended the whole business of legend making and created a fantasy – the first, the longest, and the greatest fantasy of the dastan genre.

It also influenced the elements used in *Hoshruba* from the Amir Hamza legend. Some of the familiar characters appeared in it in a more fantastic idiom.

We see this when we compare two characters common to Emperor Akbar's Amir Hamza illustrations and *Hoshruba*.

The first one is our giant friend Laqa. We remember his size and appearance from Emperor Akbar's illustrations. Now we read a description of Laqa in *Hoshruba*: "For some time now, Amir Hamza was engaged in warfare with the false god Laqa, an eighty-five-foot-tall, pitch-black giant. His head was full of vanity and resembled the ruins of a palace dome, and his limbs were the size of giant tree branches."

Mir Ahmed Ali knew better than anyone else in the world that in all matters giant, size mattered greatly. Anyone can see that the Laqa of the fantasy is a far handsomer giant than the Laqa of the legend. We salute the author for making him a pitch-black, false god besides, and for the whole palace-dome and giant-tree imagery.

The second character is Amir Hamza's master trickster, Amar Ayyar. We meet him as well in Emperor Akbar's illustrated story. In one illustration he is blithely kicking an enemy trickster. In another place he is setting fire to a dragon with naphtha. In both illustrations, Amar Ayyar is shown to be thin. Except for this relative slimness, he is indistinguishable from other soldiers in Amir Hamza's army.

Now we read Amar Ayyar's fantastic description in *Hoshruba*: "...a head like a dried gourd, eyes the size of cumin seeds, ears like apricots, cheeks resembling bread cake, a neck that was thread-like, and limbs akin to rope. His lower body measured six yards and upper body three."

Some of this marvellous detail could also be the natural result of hundreds of years of exaggeration through oral retelling, but it is equally likely that in the world of *Hoshruba*, exaggeration was employed, not only to create an enlarged picture of an event but also to provide one that was fantastic.

While the world of *Hoshruba* was fantastic, its details were not alien to its audience. Mir Ahmed Ali had modelled them on the world he knew best – the Lucknow of nineteenth century India. It was one of the centres of Indo-Islamic culture and civilization. The details of dress, food, etiquette and daily life in *Hoshruba* were borrowed from that living model. In a few places, the material and fantasy worlds overlap, as when we encounter Lucknow's iconic architectural landmarks in the tale.

Mir Ahmed Ali's story was ready but it could hardly be launched without an "original author." In the world of the Indian storytellers, glory came from association. It had always been fashionable for the storytellers to attribute their stories to the most prestigious past sources. Since Emperor Akbar's court had patronized

it, Mir Ahmed Ali deemed the emperor's poet-laureate Faizi (1547-1595) the best candidate to be touted as the "original author" of *Hoshrubā*.

The names of those who wrote the mnemonic text of Emperor Akbar's illustrations, as well as those who painted them, are recorded in history. Faizi is not one of them, but a small detail like that could hardly be allowed to stand in Mir Ahmed Ali's way. He brushed it aside royally and made Faizi the "original author" of *Hoshrubā*. Mir Ahmed Ali would be the ghost-writer of a writer ghost.

It is possible that Mir Ahmed Ali chose Faizi precisely because neither Emperor Akbar's court chroniclers nor later historians ever mentioned his name in association with the illustrated Amir Hamza project. Perhaps Mir Ahmed Ali felt that one day someone would start digging for the truth and the trail of lies would lead straight to his grave. But, no matter what Mir Ahmed Ali's twisted motivation for choosing Faizi, all the formalities were now complete and the tale was ready to be unleashed.

I can imagine Mir Ahmed Ali narrating it for the first time for a select audience – entry by invitation only – gathered at a Lucknow nobleman's house. Mir Ahmed Ali, his host and some close friends sit at the head of the room resting against bolsters. The audience sits before them on a carpet. The host tells the group that Mir Ahmed Ali has discovered, purely by accident, a new tale of the Amir Hamza cycle, which his great-great-great-grandfather received directly from Faizi. It lay hidden in an old family heirloom in the form of notes. For the last three months, Mir Ahmed Ali has been busy arranging and decoding the notes and now he is done with his labors.

The audience demands that Mir Ahmed Ali share the tale with them without loss of time. Mir Ahmed Ali quickly excuses himself. He says there has been a misunderstanding. The tale, named *Tilism-e Hoshrubā*, is not yet ready. Only one part of it is. Moreover, as he is allergic to dust, going through the old parchments gave him a sore throat. He cannot narrate that evening – a great shame because the tale is one of the likes of which his audience has never heard.

Members of the audience look at each other with open mouths. Mir Ahmed Ali has never made such an atrocious claim.

"Such a tale! Such a tale!" Mir Ahmed Ali keeps repeating to himself.

A faint smile appears on the host's face. He whispers into a friend's ear, who also smiles and nods his head. The audience becomes increasingly impatient. Mir Ahmed Ali is absolutely quiet, the audience fully disposed to riot. The host calls for calm and orders another round of refreshments, which momentarily pacifies everyone.

Mir Ahmed Ali sits with closed eyes, softly intoning some verses from a *ghazal*.

After the round of refreshments is over, the host leans toward Mir Ahmed Ali and asks if he is feeling any better. Everyone waits in anticipation. “Not so much,” says Mir Ahmed Ali.

Could he – asks the host – perhaps, maybe, possibly find the strength to narrate a little episode from the *Tilism-e Hoshrubah*? Just a tiny little insignificant bit of a scene?

That he might do, Mir Ahmed Ali says after due reflection, his eyes half shut.

Members of the audience look at each other gleefully. They have never felt so lucky.

Mir Ahmed Ali clears his throat, glances around majestically, and begins in a clear, slowly rising voice: *The cupbearers of nocturnal revelries...the bibbers from the cup of inspiration...pour the vermilion wine of inscription...into the paper's goblet thus...*

God be praised, Mir Ahmed Ali has miraculously recovered. He holds forth with accompanying theatrics for a full three hours. The account of his sore throat was greatly exaggerated, but not his praise of *Hoshrubah*. The audience sits entranced. When he stops, they clamor for more. Mir Ahmed Ali promises to tell them the rest the following night at the bazaar corner where he has an ongoing gig.

That night, many present at the narration have dreams of the scantily clad sorceress Sandal. Some dream of Prince Badiuz Zaman, “the moon of the constellation of excellence.” We do not know if anyone dreamt of the fawn that “appeared near the river bank, cavorting and gambolling like a frolicsome beloved well-versed in coquetry.”

Before he arrives in the bazaar the next evening, Mir Ahmed Ali sends out his disciple storytellers, Amba Prasad Rasa and Hakim Asghar Ali Khan, to bring him a report from the venue. They come back with the intelligence that a large crowd is gathered at the appointed place. They saw many new faces in the crowd.

That is just as Mir Ahmed Ali expected. He sets out with his disciples and arrives at the venue to loud, thankful murmurs from the throng. Everyone demands that Mir Ahmed Ali begin the tale from the beginning. And he does.

Only an infidel would doubt that it did not happen exactly in this manner.

From that day onward, the three storytellers narrate the *Hoshrubah* in public and private gatherings. When they pass in the street, people look at them with terrible envy. They are the only ones who know what will happen next. People try all kinds of tricks on the storytellers to learn what they know of the next episode, but the affable storytellers become very taciturn whenever asked in the street, “What happened next?” Outside the storytelling sessions they speak not a word about *Hoshrubah*.

In the coming days, the crowds steadily increase in number. Amba Prasad Rasa and Hakim Asghar Ali Khan arrive an hour before Mir Ahmed Ali and summarize the preceding events of the tale for the gathering before the maestro begins his narration. It will be several years before the tale will finally end. And even then, it does not end. In fact, people wait for the end so that they can revisit their favorite episodes.

Or perhaps it takes Mir Ahmed Ali many more years to end it because people keep demanding he narrate again some particular episodes they had previously enjoyed. He tries telling them to have patience, that an even better episode will soon follow, but nobody listens to him. Every day, Mir Ahmed Ali is assailed with requests – now this incident, now that passage. Like a beleaguered but indulgent parent, Mir Ahmed Ali feels obliged to give satisfaction. When he gets bored with reciting the same episode over and over again, he expresses his displeasure to the audience by narrating it breezily, without all its juicy details. People relent and let the storyteller have his own way for a few days, then return to their old ways. The drama continues.

As an oral, narrative genre, *dastan* draws heavily on improvisation, but once the story of *Hoshruba* was established it turned into an elaborate chess game. The result was predestined but not the individual moves that would always be improvised. As Mir Ahmed Ali added characters and scenes and improved on the earlier descriptions, he kept adding to the subplots that must flow toward the predestined end. He and his disciples had their own favorite episodes, which they embellished in this way during storytelling sessions.

The storytellers knew how many times a lie has to be repeated before it becomes accepted truth. They never forgot to attribute the tale to the Amir Hamza cycle of tales, and to Faizi. As far as audiences were concerned, they cared little where the tale came from as long as it was a good one and from the Amir Hamza cycle. And such an entertaining tale as *Hoshruba*! Why on earth wouldn't it be a part of *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* cycle – the grandmother of all fine tales?

All other stories of the Amir Hamza cycle paled in comparison with its popularity. The audience asked for *Hoshruba* and the storytellers complied. It was told in public and private gatherings, sometimes in long sessions that continued over many days.

In the period around the 1840s and 1850s, *Hoshruba* had taken Lucknow by storm. Travelers to Lucknow returned with the tales of *Hoshruba*. Attending Mir Ahmed Ali's narration was a sacred ritual for all Lucknow visitors.

The neighboring cities started feeling jealous. Before an all-out bidding war could break out between the princely states of India to steal the storytellers from Lucknow, a group of troopers astride fleet-footed Arabian mares, arrive in Luc-

know early one evening covered in dust. Their leader remains cloistered with Mir Ahmed Ali and his two disciples for many hours and leaves early the next morning with his entourage.

The Prince of Rampur has made a pre-emptive strike. Mir Ahmed Ali has accepted the prince's invitation to become the court storyteller of Rampur. The terms of the offer and the perks are not disclosed.

When Mir Ahmed Ali packed his belongings, his two disciples, Rasa and Khan, also packed theirs. They would follow him. Along with their bed and bedding, Rasa and Khan also packed their families, including sons Zamin Ali and Ghulam Raza. Both boys would also become storytellers. One of them would write another version of *Hoshruba*.

When the caravan of storytellers sets out for Rampur in oxen-driven carriages, the citizens of Lucknow – men, women and children, young and old alike – accompany it on foot to the limits of the city. There is not a single dry eye in the crowd. Mir Ahmed Ali shamelessly cries loudest of all.

He would never have left Lucknow if he had not been convinced that he was leaving *Hoshruba* in safe hands. He had passed on his mantle to a young storyteller named Muhammad Amir Khan, who began narrating episodes from *Hoshruba* in Lucknow some time earlier, with Mir Ahmed Ali's blessings. He had a knack for creating the episodes about tricksters. Khan did not let Mir Ahmed Ali down. He continued spreading the tale among the Lucknow audience. He also wrote at least two volumes of the tale.

By the time the oxen-driven carriages arrive in Rampur, Mir Ahmed Ali has stopped crying. On the way, he has thought up a fine magic war involving a magic effigy that kills a sorcerer by casting a love spell over him. When he is led to his lodgings by the prince's attendants he tears open his bag, takes out his inkwell and paper, and starts scribbling. It was impossible to take notes during the jolting carriage ride.

Only an infidel would doubt that it did not happen exactly in this manner.

At the Rampur court, Mir Ahmed Ali continued his storytelling work. He also put on a lot of extra weight from eating all the good stuff from the royal kitchen. Life was kind to him. His cheeks were ruddy and he laughed easily. He composed two tales at this time, one in Persian, another in Urdu, but he did not write *Hoshruba*. Once he organized the different episodes of the story, he probably improvised the rest of the details just using notes.

It fell to his disciple, Amba Prasad Rasa, to transcribe his notes. We do not know how detailed these notes were, or whether Rasa added some details to them. That manuscript is now lost; until recently even its existence and provenance were unknown.

Later, Rasa's son, Ghulam Raza, who adopted the pen name Raza, was commissioned by the Rampur court to compose the tale of *Hoshruha*. He wrote it down in fourteen volumes between 1858 and 1880. His work remained in manuscript.

But *Hoshruha* began to acquire a life of its own. While Raza's work on his manuscript was coming to an end in Rampur, Mir Ahmed Ali's home town of Lucknow was again about to become the official headquarters of *Hoshruha*. Thanks to the work started by him and his disciples and carried on by Muhammad Amir Khan, *Hoshruha* was winning over the Lucknow audience in ever greater numbers.

By then it was commonly accepted as part of the Amir Hamza cycle of tales. In fact, it also had a specified place in the cycle as its fifth book. In the early 1880s, the erudite and enterprising Munshi Naval Kishore, owner of the Naval Kishore Press, decided to publish the entire, longer Amir Hamza cycle of tales. The Naval Kishore Press decided to start its publication project with *Hoshruha* because it was an independent story and already extremely popular in oral narration.

When Munshi Naval Kishore asked around for someone to compose the tale, he was given the name of Lucknow storyteller Muhammad Husain Jah. Kishore remembered him well. Some years previous, he had been commissioned to write a short *dastan*, *Tilism-e Fasahat*. The book was a testament to his mastery of prose. Kishore showed up at a *dastan* narration session and was impressed by Jah's masterful narration of *Hoshruha*. Jah was engaged to write the *Hoshruha* tale, and that was just as it should have been. Muhammad Husain Jah's father was a *rammal* or diviner, which means – why deny it – a sorcerer. The *Hoshruha* project was in excellent hands.

Jah knew his *Hoshruha* and, as a professional storyteller, he knew its real provenance. Now that he was commissioned to write it, he decided to compose a master version using all available written versions and oral traditions of his contemporary storytellers. Amba Prasad Rasa was still alive at the time. Jah obtained the version Rasa had prepared from Mir Ahmed Ali's notes. He also used the one written by Ghulam Raza in fourteen volumes, and the two volumes written by Muhammad Amir Khan. Besides those, he borrowed some episodes from a contemporary storyteller, Sheikh Tasadduq Husain. Then he sat down to compose his masterwork.

Jah must have had a delightful time comparing how the several storytellers differed in their accounts of each character and his or her peculiarities. The work would not be unlike making a composite literary sketch of each character. And he did, indeed, do a fine work of compilation. The result is a complex set of characters unparalleled in literature, and a highly subversive arrangement of roles.

That a woman, the sorceress Mahrukh Magic-Eye, should lead the camp of True Believers may seem curious now, but it was not so in the nineteenth century Indo-Islamic society where women had a vibrant social role. There are a few

shy and retiring females as well; Mahjabeen Diamond-Robe and Almas Fairy-Face are two such examples. However, Queen Mahrukh Magic-Eye, trickster girl Sarsar Swordfighter, Empress Heyrat and sorceress Bahar of the Spring-Quarter are complex and powerful women entirely comfortable with their sexuality. They hold their own against male tricksters and sorcerers in intellect, physical prowess and magical powers. The strident personalities of these female characters did not emerge from the author's fancy but from the lives of the contemporary women. The *Hoshrubas* sorceresses appear in the dresses of Lucknow princesses and noble women, speak in their idiom and follow their social etiquette.

The most complex and interesting character in all of *Hoshrubas* is Emperor of Hoshrubas, sorcerer Afrasiyab. In any heroic tale it is the hero who faces the greatest number of threats and challenges. In *Hoshrubas*, it is not the Conqueror of the Tilism or the trickster Amar Ayyar who face the greatest number of odds. It is Afrasiyab. He must keep the increasingly demanding false god Laqa safe from Amir Hamza, take care of the menacing rebel sorcerers led by Mahrukh Magic-Eye, watch out for the rampaging tricksters and, finally, contend with the rival emperor of the neighboring tilism. In setting him up against all these challenges, Mir Ahmed Ali and succeeding storytellers probably wished to show Afrasiyab's power and resourcefulness. In the process, they also made him into a heroic character.

At a personal, human level too, Afrasiyab is very likable. Even his unbridled sexual appetite makes him a far more interesting character than the asexual Amar Ayyar and the frigid, battle-hardened Amir Hamza. Afrasiyab shows great sensitivity toward his beloved Princess Bahar, who has joined his enemies. He is magnanimous toward a couple whose only son has died in his cause. When he boastfully fulminates against the god of sorcerers to assert his grandeur, he sounds entirely believable. And the scene where he sacrifices his beautiful male lover to a vampire monster to save his empire is one of the most tragic and memorable in all his personal history.

The tale of *Hoshrubas* is a contest between sorcerers and tricksters more than it is a war between sorcerers. Against the endlessly powerful sorcerers, the tricksters rely on their cunning, talent and wits. This is a fundamental departure in storytelling from *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* legend where holy figures of all stripes made frequent appearances to offer aid and counsel to Amir Hamza, and sometimes even did his work for him. In *Hoshrubas*, it is hard to find a holy personage. When Amir Hamza and his camp are faced with dire situations, it is the tricksters who save the day.

The tricksters' mastery of the art of disguise plays a crucial role in their success. Sometimes their change of disguise from one person to another occurs so rapidly and in such complex mixes that it seems the creators of *Hoshrubas* are play-

ing a literary thimble-rig with the reader. Perhaps this was the contribution of the storyteller Muhammad Amir Khan, who was the trickster expert.

It is true that magic does not have any effect on Amar Ayyar's holy gifts – an inheritance from *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* legend – but equally, Amar Ayyar is also proscribed by a code of tricksters against using holy gifts to kill sorcerers. Even when Amar Ayyar uses his holy gifts, he employs them to aid his tricks or in self defense. This is another symbolic way in which *Hoshrubā* neutralizes the influences from the *Adventures of Amir Hamza* legend where these devices were used directly. It can be said that throughout the fantasy, the focus has shifted from divine help to human resourcefulness.

Mir Ahmed Ali and other Indian storytellers had brought about a fundamental shift in the approach to storytelling. They made the Indo-Islamic *dastan* a completely new strain within the *dastan* genre. This dazzling uniqueness was one of the reasons for Hoshrubā's widespread appeal and popularity.

The second volume of *Hoshrubā* came out in 1884. There was a delay of four years before the third volume was published in 1888–89. Considering the popularity of *Hoshrubā*, the Naval Kishore Press hurried Jah, demanding that he finish the subsequent volumes speedily.

But Jah was in deep trouble. Merging the three accounts of the different storytellers and simultaneously composing his own version was difficult enough. At the same time, he was devastated by the deaths of his young son and daughter, which happened while he wrote the third volume. For a while he even stopped writing. He resumed at the encouragement of his publisher. He shares his trauma with his readers by duly incorporating the entire episode in verse in the *Hoshrubā* narrative.

After he finished the fourth volume in 1890, or perhaps a little before that, the publisher informed Jah that he would be relieved of the responsibility of writing the three remaining volumes. Someone else had been hired to finish the project more quickly.

The fourth volume has no last words by the author, which was customary. Jah had surrendered the manuscript on an unhappy note, and it was little wonder. His replacement for the *Hoshrubā* project was his rival storyteller, Ahmed Husain Qamar.

Here was a man with a nicely checkered past. According to his own account, his family participated in the 1857 Mutiny against the East India Company forces. Two of his brothers died in the fighting. Qamar survived and was cleared of the charge of mutineering but because he was not yet of age, he could not lay claim to his estate, which was confiscated by the government. He studied law and became an agent at one of the local courts but when he appeared for the confirmation

examination, the old charge of participating in the mutiny was dug up and quoted as a reason for his disqualification. Around that time, Qamar became interested in storytelling and took it up as a profession.

Qamar took up the *Hoshrubā* project where Jah had left off. After making a few self-important remarks about how he would have been the best choice to write the four earlier volumes as well, he got down to work. But just as he was getting started, and with great fanfare, a piece of news arrived that completely marred his happiness.

Apparently Jah's work on *Hoshrubā* was close to his heart. He was not willing to give up without a fight. In the December of 1889, the same year *Hoshrubā* was taken away from him, he played his hand by founding his own press and privately publishing the first part of the fifth volume of *Hoshrubā*, with the promise of more – a lot more – to follow.

Qamar and the Naval Kishore Press sat up. They decided they were up to the challenge. That Qamar was extremely prolific also helped. Naval Kishore Press brought out the first part of the fifth volume in just a few months in 1891, followed shortly with the second part. The competition with Jah seems to have been the main reason for the haste: it is the only volume of *Hoshrubā* that was published in two parts.

After publishing the first part of the fifth volume, Jah fell silent. Perhaps he was ill. He had mentioned a long period of illness in the third volume. Only one copy of this privately published, slim volume survived and was discovered recently by Urdu researcher Rifaqat Ali Shahid. Throughout the first four volumes, Jah had acknowledged the contribution of other storytellers. But it is in this privately published fifth volume that he methodically lists the three sources he had borrowed from. Its first four pages, in which he may have explained his reasons for leaving the Naval Kishore Press, are missing.

Qamar himself is uncharacteristically tight-lipped about the incident. In the notice printed in the fifth volume of *Hoshrubā*, he cursorily mentions that "some chance events" ended Jah's association with the publisher.

Only fragmentary information is available about the professional relationship between Jah and Qamar. In his first published work, *Tilism-e Fasahat*, Jah acknowledges Ahmed Husain Qamar as his instructor. However, Urdu scholar Shamsur Rahman Faruqi has suggested that the uncharacteristic exaggeration and hyperbole he uses on the occasion suggests that Jah paid the compliment sarcastically. This theory is quite plausible because in a later edition, those words of hyperbole were removed. Qamar himself never made any claims to be Jah's teacher and we can be sure that had it been otherwise, Qamar would have proclaimed the fact

daily from the roof of Naval Kishore Press while he lived, and had it engraved on his tombstone.

Qamar's head may not have been as large as the false god Laqa's, but it was as full of vanity. He loved himself with a powerful love that sometimes forced him to claim credit for deeds he had not done. He often experienced small episodes of jealousy during the writing of *Hoshrubā*. In some weak moments, he declared himself to be the "original author" of *Hoshrubā*. But then Qamar would have other weak moments in which, while deriding Mir Ahmed Ali or Jah, or calling their integrity into question, he would make statements that totally contradicted his earlier claim. All this abuse was hurled within the narrative itself, of course. The old mutineer in Qamar had not died. All his subversive talents were now channelled into the *dastan* genre.

Qamar also liked to make guest appearances in the narrative in the middle of scenes to give the characters a chance to praise him and his many talents. From magic slave girls to Laqa's devil designate, to the Emperor of Sorcerer Afrasiyab, everyone takes a turn praising Qamar's first-rate poetical mind, his skill in composing Persian verses, and his ability to decode knotty Arabic prose. Unlike Jah, who always acknowledged the least contribution to the narrative by his seniors and contemporaries, Qamar never credited anyone besides himself. But despite all these personality quirks and the licenses he took with the narrative, Qamar was as profoundly gifted as a storyteller as was Jah, although their talents lay in different areas.

Jah died between December, 1890, and October, 1893. According to Faruqi's research, he died at a relatively young age. The *Hoshrubā* project was completed around the same time. The publication of the sixth volume in 1892 was quickly followed by the seventh and last volume in 1893.

Tilism-e Hoshrubā became a bestseller. Between 1883 and 1930, eight editions were published from Lucknow alone. The tale acquired an iconic status in Urdu literature as the ultimate fantasy tale, and the word "Hoshrubā" itself became proverbial for fantastic literature.

Faizi continued to be credited as its original author. His ghost must still be smiling from ear to ear. To have written the tale of Hoshrubā with an unmoving finger would be a neat trick, even for a spirit. But the happiest ghost must be Mir Ahmed Ali's, his smile the broadest of all. Not only was his creation of *Hoshrubā* accepted as a part of the Amir Hamza cycle, but it also became its defining, single most important tale, surpassing all others. No storyteller could ask for greater glory.

The *Hoshrubā* tale later found other champions as well. A year before the world threw itself into the madness of the First World War, the Rampur storyteller Mirza Alimuddin (1854–1927) launched his personal campaign to write the

Hoshruba tale. He campaigned longer, harder and more gloriously. From 1913–1919 he produced twelve volumes and two secondary legends associated with the *Hoshruba* tale.

Then there was Mir Baqir Ali (1850?–1928), the last renowned storyteller of India in the twentieth century. He was born into a family of royal storytellers at a time when *Hoshruba* was at the peak of its popularity. But in the 1920s, when he was in his last years, Mir Baqir Ali was unable to find an audience for his art. He privately published some stories for children to make a living, but failed. In the end, he gave up and made a living selling betel leaves. He breathed his last a year after Mirza Alimuddin's death. A sample of Mir Baqir Ali's storytelling method and glimpses of his last days were preserved in a literary sketch in *Dilli Ki Chand Ajib Hastiyan* by Ashraf Subuhi Dehlvi.

The *Hoshruba* history would be incomplete without the mention of the Pakistani painter Ustad Allah Bakhsh (1895–1978), who captured the magic and dense storytelling of *Hoshruba* in his glorious painting *Tilism-e Hoshruba*. This painting hangs in the Lahore Museum.

Without Jah and Qamar – two of Urdu's greatest prose writers – the hoax created by Mir Ahmed Ali and storytellers in his generation may not have received such wide acclaim. This tale, with its imaginative scope, poetic delicacy, ornate presentation, and metaphor-rich language, became the pride of Urdu literature because of these men. They will always be remembered as two of Urdu's greatest benefactors. Their ghosts, finally free of their professional rivalries, together might even be constructing a tilism of their own – on a much larger scale than *Hoshruba*. And we can be sure that Qamar's part of the tilism will be completed long before Jah ever reaches the halfway mark.

But these are not the only ghosts. Others have also made their presence known. In 2005, an Indian historian, Mahmood Farooqui, began studying the cultural history of the *dastans* and became interested in *dastan* narration. Farooqui and Himanshu Tyagi collaborated to start *dastan* narration from *Hoshruba*. Later, Danish Husain joined Farooqui as his partner. Their performances were held in both India and Pakistan and attracted a large following. Then, one day in 2006, the Indian historian Shahid Amin, told Farooqui of two short, crackling audio recordings of someone's voice, which he had recently discovered in the British Library. They belonged to the last famous *dastan* narrator, Mir Baqir Ali. These three-minute recordings were made in Delhi in 1920 as a part of the Linguistic Survey of India records. One recording was a rendering of the tale of the *Prodigal Son*, which all native speakers had to record for that project. Mir Baqir Ali was unable to finish the tale because his narration exceeded the short duration of the 78-rpm disk and had to be ended abruptly. The other recording was a short *dastan* of a foolish young

nobleman who wishes to visit his in-laws and encounters countless obstacles on the way.

Mir Baqir Ali's ghost has resurfaced eight decades after his death, to say thank-you to someone who had renewed his tradition.

What if all the storytellers are also still with us "in spirit"? And what if one day this battalion of ghosts feels nostalgic, and enters a bookshop to check the latest edition of *Hoshruba* but doesn't find it on the shelves? Who will have the heart to tell them that because of our neglect and disregard of Indo-Islamic literature, the rich language of *Hoshruba* has become inaccessible, that our own indifference has now become the tall mountain, reaching into the skies beyond which this tale lies, out of reach for all but a few?

That situation must be avoided at all cost.

And this is why the army of readers is gathered here; why I beat the kettle-drums.

Hear then that this translation of *Tilism-e Hoshruba*, the first in any language, is a secret passage through this mountain. You may now bypass the dark terrain of craggy metaphors where puzzles grow, and easily slip to the other side to engage this tale.

And once you are done, you must remember to take on the mountain of indifference. It would be a shame to disappoint all the kindly ghosts in the bookshop who brought you this most excellent tale. – M.A.F. (December 5, 2008)

MAGICAL AND MARVELLOUS DEVICES AND BEINGS

DEMON: Also called a *dev*. A gigantic being with horns and a tail, which also has a taste for fine clothes, jewelery and lavish palaces.

DOPPELGANGER: An invisible being associated with every human being. Its existence is independent of its human counterpart's and unconstrained by considerations of time and space. When a doppelganger enters a corpse a dead person can revive and narrate the circumstances of his death.

FAIRY: Also called a *peri* (female fairy) or *perizad* (male fairy). Winged male or female creatures that live on Mount Qaf.

GIANT: A legendary, manlike being of huge stature. The false god Laqa is a giant.

JINN: Creatures made of fire and invisible to the human eye. According to popular belief, jinns and fairies are the children of Jan, a being who once inhabited Earth and was banished for disobedience to the Supreme Being.

LIGHTNING-BOLT: One of seven sorceresses who exist in the form of lightning in a crimson cloud and strike as lightning bolts. They also appear in human form as beautiful, golden-skinned women.

MAGIC BIRD: A bird made of magic by sorcerers to act as their eyes and ears and spy on enemy camps.

MAGIC CLAW: A claw or hand made by magic that carries messages, objects or people. Sometimes magic slaves turn into magic claws to perform these functions.

MAGIC DOUBLE: A magical projection of Emperor Afrasiyab, which replaced him when he was away or when he had to disappear during imminent danger.

MAGIC EFFIGY: A magical being made by a sorcerer or sorceress that assumes human shape and can work the magic spells assigned to it by its master or mistress.

MAGIC FAIRY: Not to be confused with *FAIRY* above. A magic fairy is made by a sorcerer by magic. Magic fairies can be either male or female.

MAGIC SPIRIT: The spirit of a dead person, commanded by a sorcerer's spells. A magic spirit is set free at the death of the sorcerer who commands it. Unless captured by another sorcerer by reciting the capturing spells at the time of its master's dying, a magic spirit is released into the cosmos and becomes harmless.

MAGIC SLAVE: They are both male and female. Magic slaves and magic slave girls are magical beings that can fly in the air and travel under the earth. They can change into magic claws and carry away people and objects. Magic slaves are also employed by sorcerers to fight in the battlefield, and to guard sorcerers against dangers. They can be made of paper, lentil-flour, clay, wax, brass, or steel. They are made by the occult art of *nairanj* by which a sorcerer manipulates the properties of matter to create mechanisms.

MAGIC MIRROR: A magical mirror that projected Emperor Afrasiyab's presence into his court during his absence.

MAGIC TROOPER: A horseback warrior created by magic who fights at a sorcerer's command. It is impossible to kill magic troopers with weapons.

SORCERER: Someone who has a commanding knowledge of the occult powers of astral bodies, alchemy and magic, and can combine them to create a tilism or make spells.

TRICKSTER: Male or female warriors known for their cunning, quickness and mastery of disguise.

Amir Hamza and the False God Laqa

The deft fingers of narrators weave this splendid legend with the golden thread of sorcery and spread it out thus, before marvelling eyes.

Emperor Naushervan of Persia dreamt one night that a crow coming from the East flew off with his crown, then a hawk flew in from the West, killed the crow and restored him his crown. In the morning he asked the interpretation of this dream

from his minister, Buzurjmehr, who was singularly adept in all occult arts. Buzurjmehr made his calculations and replied that in the future a raider named Hashsham from the eastern city of Khaibar would defeat the emperor's army and capture his crown and throne. A warrior named Hamza from the western city of Mecca would then appear on the scene and would kill the raider and restore the regalia to the emperor.

Hearing the auspicious news, Naushervan sent Buzurjmehr to Mecca in anticipation of Hamza's birth to declare the boy the emperor's protégé.

On the day Hamza was born to the chieftain of a tribe, two other boys, named Amar and Muqbil, were also born in Mecca. Buzurjmehr predicted from occult foreknowledge that they would be Hamza's trusted companions. He foretold that Amar would become a devious trickster and Muqbil a matchless archer.

Meanwhile, in the far-away, enchanted land of Mount Qaf, a daughter was born to Emperor Shahpal, the lord of the jinns, fairies and demons. She was named Aasman Peri. Shahpal's minister and diviner made her horoscope and revealed that after eighteen years, the demons of Mount Qaf would rebel and overthrow Emperor Shahpal. Then a human being named Hamza would come from the world of men to defeat the demons and restore Shahpal to the throne. The horoscope also disclosed that Hamza would marry Aasman Peri. Upon learning of this, Emperor Shahpal sent for Hamza's cradle from Mecca and kept him in Mount Qaf for seven days. Before he was sent back, Hamza was nursed on the milk of jinns, demons, fairies, ghouls and other beasts to expel the fear of those creatures from his heart.

As Hamza, Amar and Muqbil grew up they met with many adventures and received holy gifts and talents with whose help they triumphed over powerful enemies. Their fame and exploits won them friends and followers. Hamza was chosen as their *amir* or leader, and became renowned as Amir Hamza. Because he was born under a lucky astrological conjunction of Jupiter and Venus, he was titled the Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction.

As foretold by Buzurjmehr, Amir Hamza defeated the raider Hashsham who captured Naushervan's crown and throne and restored them to the emperor. While at Naushervan's court, Amir Hamza fell in love with the emperor's daughter, Princess Mehr-Nigar. Their love attracted the notice of Naushervan's evil minister, Bakhtak. He was no idle hand at mischief and, suspecting Hamza of carrying on secret trysts with Mehr-Nigar, Bakhtak began to stir trouble at court. Buzurjmehr did his best to protect Amir Hamza but Amir Hamza's amorous passion and reckless trysts with the princess made Buzurjmehr fear for his own reputation.

When the King of India rebelled against Emperor Naushervan, Buzurjmehr saw an opportunity to send Amir Hamza on a far-away campaign. He advised the emperor to promise Princess Mehr-Nigar's hand in marriage to the one who would

subdue the rebel king. As Buzurjmehr expected, Amir Hamza accepted the challenge, was engaged to Mehr-Nigar, and sent off on the campaign to India.

In Amir Hamza's absence, Bakhtak hatched countless treacherous plots against him with the sanction of the fickle-minded emperor. But Amir Hamza foiled them with the help of his holy gifts, Amar Ayyar's cunning stratagems, and Buzurjmehr's assistance. When Amir Hamza returned victorious from his adventures, the palace intrigues continued against him. However, to the shame and chagrin of Naushervan and his court, Mehr-Nigar left to join Hamza.

Meanwhile, the foretold rebellion of demons was underway in the enchanted land of Mount Qaf. Emperor Shahpal sent for Hamza to subdue the rebellious demons. While Amir Hamza was away, Amar Ayyar countered the intrigues and plots hatched by Bakhtak and his son, Bakhtiarak. He defended his camp against Naushervan's armies and kept them from carrying away Mehr-Nigar. During his destined eighteen-year stay in Mount Qaf, Amir Hamza quelled the rebellion of the demons, married Aasman Peri and had a daughter with her.

After spending eighteen years in Mount Qaf Amir, Hamza finally returned and married Mehr-Nigar. He married several other women and fairies besides and had many sons and grandsons.

Amir Hamza appointed his grandson, Saad, King of the True Believers but retained command of the armies himself. Many sons were also born to the trickster Amar Ayyar and were appointed tricksters to Amir Hamza's sons.

Amir Hamza and his armies continued to battle tyrants, giants and sorcerers for the glory of the True Faith and encountered and destroyed many tilisms. Amir Hamza's knowledge of *Ism-e Azam* or the Most Great Name protected him against magic and sorcery. Many of these events are recounted in *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*.

For some time, Amir Hamza was engaged in warfare with the false God Laqa, an eighty-five-foot-tall, pitch-black giant. His head was full of vanity and resembled the ruins of a palace dome; his limbs were the size of giant tree branches. He proclaimed himself God and declared Bakhtiarak, son of Bakhtak, the devil-designate of his court. A great many infidels and sorcerers became Laqa's believers. However, the fates and fortunes decided by Laqa always turned out to be false. Calamity and misfortune marked his followers but Laqa had not yet run out of luck.

The Tilism of Hoshruha and the Master of the Tilism, Sorcerer Afrasiyab

We are told that at the bottom of the untold past, a group of sorcerers met to create a tilism or magical world by using occult sciences of *simia*, *kimia*, *limia* and *rimia* to infuse inanimate matter with the spirits of planetary and cosmic forces.

In the tilism, the sorcerers exercised powers that defied the laws of God and the physical world. They created illusions, transferred spirits between bodies, transmuted matter, made talismans, and configured and exploited Earth's inherent physical forces to create extraordinary marvels.

Once the tilism was created, the sorcerers named it Hoshrubá. A sorcerer named Lachin ruled Hoshrubá in its early years. Then one of his deputies, the cunning sorcerer Afrasiyab, deposed his master and usurped the throne. Afrasiyab became the Emperor of Hoshrubá and Master of the Tilism.

Afrasiyab and his sorceress wife, Empress Heyrat, ruled over Hoshrubá's three regions: Zahir the Manifest, Batin the Hidden, and Zulmat the Dark. These regions were also tilisms and contained countless dominions and smaller tilisms filled with thousands of buildings, enclosures, gardens and palaces governed by sorcerer princes and sorceress princesses.

Ordinary citizens of Hoshrubá lived in the region of Zahir the Manifest. Empress Heyrat and the emperor's ministers, peers and confidants made their abode in Batin the Hidden. Zulmat the Dark was a secluded region of Hoshrubá to which few had access. It was inhabited by two of Hoshrubá's most powerful sorceresses.

An enchanted river called the River of Flowing Blood divided the regions of Zahir and Batin. A bridge that was made of smoke and guarded by two smoke lions stretched over it. It was called the Bridge of the Magic Fairies and from it a three-tiered tower rose to the skies. On the lowest tier of this tower, magic fairies stood alert, holding trumpets and clarions to their lips. From the second tier, another group of magic fairies constantly tossed pearls into the river to the fish that swam, carrying them in their mouths. On the topmost tier, gigantic Abyssinians arrayed in double rows skirmished together with swords. The blood that flowed from their wounds poured into the water below and gave the River of Flowing Blood its name.

Emperor Afrasiyab moved freely between the three regions of Hoshrubá. Whenever anyone called out his name in the tilism, Afrasiyab's magic alerted him to the call. The emperor's fortune revealed itself in the palms of his hands. His left hand warned him of inauspicious moments and the right hand revealed auspicious ones. He also possessed the *Book of Sameri*, which contained an account of every event inside and outside the tilism. And he had a magic mirror that projected his body into his court during his absence, and many magic doubles who replaced him when he was in imminent danger.

Besides sorcerers and sorceresses, Afrasiyab also commanded magic slaves and magic slave girls, who fought at his command and performed any and all tasks assigned them.

Emperor Afrasiyab was among the seven immortal sorcerers of Hoshrubá who could not be killed while their doppelgangers lived.

But every tilism had a fixed lifespan and a tilism key that contained directions for its unravelling. The conqueror of a tilism was one who would use that key to unravel the tilism at the appointed time. Over the years, the whereabouts of Hoshruha's tilism key was forgotten. As Hoshruha's life neared its end, Emperor Afrasiyab resolved to defend his empire and tilism and foil the tilism's conqueror when he appeared.

Unbeknown to Emperor Afrasiyab the Master of the Tilism events were already unfolding outside Hoshruha that would soon test his resolve.

The false god Laqa was in flight after suffering fresh defeats at the hands of Amir Hamza the Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction, whose armies and spies hotly pursued him.

Each day brought Laqa and Amir Hamza a little nearer to Hoshruha.

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website: www.hoshruha.com

Vocabulary of Resistance: A Conversation with Kishwar Naheed

By Mahwash Shoaib

Kishwar Naheed, as all her biographers note, was born in 1940 in Bulandshahr, India. As her family moved to Pakistan at the partition of the sub-continent, the bloodshed at that time left an impression on her at a tender age; she has also been witness to the struggles and aspirations that Pakistan has gone through as a nation. Her written work, spanning for more than four decades, chronicles her experiences as a woman writer engaged in the creative and civic arenas, even as she has dealt with personal, social, and official backlashes. Her stature as the matriarch of Urdu poetry is lodged in her prolificacy as a writer, her reworking of the lyrical ghazal, the innovations she helped bring about in the forms of free verse and prose poetry, and the extensive translations she has made of radical poets from other languages. Kishwar Naheed's poetic oeuvre consists of ten volumes of poetry, where her voice has grown "louder, more insistent and somehow more intimate" (Steele 343). She won the Adamjee Prize of Literature for her first collection, *Lab-e-Goya / Lips that Speak* in 1969, the Best Translation Award from Columbia University, the UNESCO Prize for Children's Literature for her series of children's stories, the Mandela Prize in 1997, and the award of Sitara-e-Imtiaz by the Government of Pakistan in 2000. She regularly writes columns for the daily *Jang* newspaper on current issues of political, social, and literary importance, which were collected in *Warq Warq Aaina / Leaves of Reflections*. Besides her numerous activities of attending national and international symposia, she can be found busy penning poems and columns in the office of her NGO 'Hawwa,' which she runs in Islamabad to help rural women become financially independent through cottage industries and handicrafts. Her first memoir, *Buri Aurat ki Katha*, has just been translated by Durdana Soomro as *A Bad Woman's Story*. The poem, "Rab se Shart-nama / Contract with the Lord," (added as a supplementary file to the online version of this interview) is being reprinted with the poet's permission from *Wehshat aur Barood men Lipti hui Shairi / Poetry Bound in Desolation and Dynamite*, also published this year.

I conducted this interview with Kishwar Naheed over the course of a few months through email. Our correspondence progressed as the situation in Pakistan changed. In her succinct responses, she elucidated her views on the venture

of writing, the location of women, and the dread surrounding the universal surge in extremism. She was very forthcoming in her responses, very lucid, even blunt at times. This unflinching honesty and clear-sightedness has been a feature of her writing from the beginning of her career, which has earned her the wrath of official and literary circles. Last year, she had written a very moving tribute to Ahmad Faraz on his passing away, one of the many national cataclysms Pakistan has recently been through. With the loss of Faraz, I would say that Kishwar Naheed has taken on the mantle of national conscience that male poets like Faraz and Faiz earlier wore publicly.

MS: Kishwar, let's start by talking about your latest endeavors: you have been involved in the rehabilitation of the IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) from Swat. What news do you bring back from the camps?

KN: People, especially women were distressed because of being away from home and because of the heat, which was unbearable.

MS: Have their conditions improved since you last saw them? Do you foresee any dangers and risks these women might face in their return to their homes?

KN: They have returned home but the danger is not over. Women usually don't come out of home, just as they did before.

MS: Your new volume, *Wehshat aur Barood men Lipti hui Shairi / Poetry Bound in Desolation and Dynamite*, came out in the beginning of this year. In the gap between the publication of your last volume of poetry, *Sokhta Samani-e-Dil / Composition of a Scorched Heart*, you have written two memoirs, numerous children's books, compiled your newspaper articles, chronicled Pakistani women weavers and embroiderers, and co-edited a collection of literary essays for the journal *Adbiyaat*. Since your poems in the new volume span from 2001 to 2008, what changes have you observed in the Pakistani literary landscape?

KN: Fundamentalism has affected every mind and all social structures.

MS: Do you find reflections of fundamentalism even in the literary field?

KN: When each poet starts writing more of Naats and Hamds, it is an obvious reflection of mental fundamentalism.

MS: Do the words of poetry offer any hope in fighting this infection?

KN: Not exactly, the whole surrounding environment and the media has to change to stop such infections.

MS: In one of your notable earliest ghazals, you had written “Kuch yoon hi zard zard si Naheed aaj thi / Kuch aurhni ka rang bhi khilta hui na tha,” (*Lab-e-Goya / Lips that Speak* 86). How far is the distance between your earlier ghazal and the latest: “Pehchanny ko dost buht the, magar na the / Naheed sharh-e-zeest bhi namnak ho gai” (*Wehshat aur Barood men Lipti hui Shairi / Poetry Bound in Desolation and Dynamite* 124)?

KN: The whole atmosphere, the events, the brutal murders all effect one’s idiom and scenario. It is not just the past few years: at first there was the worst law and order in Zia’s times, then the creation of MQM, then 9/11 took place and, thereafter, there has been continuous brutal action, especially against women.

MS: Why is there a conscious turn from ghazal to azad nazm (free verse) to nasri nazm (prose poetry) in your poetry? The inclusion of a section on ghazals in virtually all of your volumes suggests that the ghazal holds a special place in your poetics; how do you deal with weaving between the two different forms of the nasri nazm and the ghazal?

KN: I started writing Ghazal in the beginning. As I grew in consciousness and feeling, all forms of poetry were around me. I love to write a Ghazal in the same manner as I am absorbed in writing a prose poem.

MS: How are the demands of the ghazal different from that of the prose poem? For instance, what roles do subject matter or the length of the line play in your choice between the two?

KN: Ghazal, as a classic form, is in my blood, while I am used to writing prose poems because of the demands of the subject. I never write anything intentionally, it comes over.

MS: Kishwar, speech – the act of articulation, as opposed to silence or oppression – is a significant theme in your poetry. I also believe that the space of houses – especially women’s position in a particular social and historical place – is an important motif in your poetry. If we take the example of your famous poem, “Hum Gunahgar Aurtain / We Sinful Women,” is there any connection between these two themes? I’m thinking here of your reference to the absence of Swati women from the public sphere.

KN: Any woman, outspoken or not, has to take the burden of so many activities within the home, in the office, and in society. This needs writing for expression, but when the majority have no courage, people like me have to write in their idiom.

MS: How many goals of the Progressive Writer's Movement do you think have been realized in Urdu literature?

KN: The scene and terminology in Urdu poetry changed because of the Progressive movement.

MS: Do you believe that there is a heightened need for the same spirit of engagement among writers in the present time?

KN: Much more so, as colonialism has extended its structure in the form of globalization and consumerism.

MS: As a poet who is engaged in social activism at the grass roots level, how do you respond to the charges that poetry is contaminated by access to the real, political world?

KN: The objective of working at grass roots level indicates that change must come at the lowest level. The reflection of fulfillment and joy on the faces of deprived women makes me happy and confident that the world may change if we develop women in particular.

MS: What do you make of male critics who say that poetry written by women poets gains attention merely because it is written by women?

KN: Male poets and critics, in particular, have not yet been able to understand the sensibility of women writers, the way they have changed the scenario of Urdu literature. It is again the responsibility of women as critics to expand the structure and understanding of women's writings.

MS: Your poetry, and more lately your prose work such as *Buri Aurat ki Katha / A Bad Woman's Story*, has focused on the self as embodied by a woman and the experiences of a writing woman. Do the self and the body play an equal role in your poetry?

KN: Self is not realized by all, even by educated women. They have a similar position about their body – a majority of women have expressed that they may or may not enjoy sex, but they have no courage to express this. Both these concepts are amalgamated in my prose and poetry.

MS: Is it a fair assessment that there are obstacles, in your opinion, between writing about women's bodies and sexuality in Urdu?

KN: A lot more, many words in prose don't even exist. Likewise, I cannot write in poetry what male writers may easily describe. Besides the attitude against women's writing, we face many taboos in Urdu language. My translation of *The Second*

Sex [published as *Aurat Nafsiyat ke Ainay mein*] was banned because of the use of words describing a woman's private parts in actual language.

MS: You have been a part of the women's rights movement, e.g. WAF (Women's Action Forum), in Pakistan from its very inception. What kind of milestones do you think it has helped achieve? Where is it heading?

KN: Pakistani women's movement had been in reaction to the fundamentalism introduced by the dictator Zia-ul-Haq. The struggle has made the policymakers include women even at the grass roots level in political struggle. Laws against sexual abuse and discrimination of women have already been proposed by women lawmakers in the Parliament for approval.

MS: Your memoir, *Buri Aurat ke Khatoot - Nazaida Beti ke Naam / A Bad Woman's Letters – To My Unborn Daughter*, relates your disappointment at the conditions that a young woman in Pakistan may face. Do you feel that the younger generation of Pakistani women appreciates the gains that have been made by the women's rights movement?

KN: They do, but the dogma of a retrogressive culture and its taboos don't allow them to write in the same manner.

MS: How is the struggle for empowering women in Pakistan different from Anglocentric feminisms?

KN: Women of Pakistan have no choice in their marriage or profession, it is mostly directed by the family. Even now a girl of 3 years is married to a man who is 66 years old. A second marriage or any number of marriages, especially among politicians and feudal lords, are common, yet a woman is treated like a commodity. The struggle of the sub-continental women is meant for their basic rights.

MS: You have been critical of Barbara Metcalf's translation (*Perfecting Woman: Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar*) and its implications for the representations of Pakistani women.

KN: *Bihishti Zewar* is not for emancipation for women, that is why I objected on its translation.

MS: Do you believe then that the translator also shares responsibility in the choice and method of transmission of a text to another language and culture?

KN: Very much so. The translator must have a command on the two languages that he or she is dealing with, and also of the culture which is related to the background of the writing being translated.

MS: How significant have your own translations of other poets and writers into Urdu been for your own work?

KN: No one has analyzed the translations that I have done. I have seen translations of my poetry and prose – translation is a really difficult job, those who do it well are masters.

MS: Are there any writers that have particularly accorded you satisfaction?

KN: Many writers like Maya Angelou or Neruda have been greatly admired. Likewise, Marquez and Kundera are very close to the thinking of Urdu writers.

MS: Your memoir *Shanasaaiyan, Ruswaiaian / Acquaintances, Scandals* portrays a fascinating scene of synthesis and collaboration between writers and artists even in the harshest of political conditions in Pakistan. As you have interacted with various personalities from the fields of literature, painting, and performing arts and have headed the National Council of Arts, can you inform us of the reconciliation of literature and arts?

KN: The two forms are very close, even dance or music interweave with literature.

MS: Do you find a similar tendency towards collaboration between the two fields in Pakistan today?

KN: Not exactly.

MS: What has changed in the interim?

KN: The painters have shown their craft with the exhibition “Hanging Fire,” which was presented in New York on Sep 10, 2009. An anthology of literature written on Swat in particular, and terrorism in general, has just been printed. This is the situation on the creative front. However, common people are scared of the target killings, and this is a situation that is getting graver nowadays.

MS: Among the new writers in Urdu, whom do you find most promising and whose poetry do you enjoy reading?

KN: Many new and young writers, Attiya Dawood is one of them.

MS: What do you think of the future of the development of Urdu literature in Pakistan?

KN: Even as extremism would flourish, more and more Urdu literature in reaction to it, with stronger voices, will emerge.

MS: Since you have been traveling to mushairas and conferences throughout the world, do you hold any faith in the progress of Urdu poetry in the diasporic communities outside of Pakistan?

KN: A few good writers, including women poets, have appeared in Europe and in America. I hope new ones will join them.

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An Interview with Dr. Muhammad Umar Memon

By Abroo H. Khan

A connoisseur of Urdu language, Muhammad Umar Memon is a literary pioneer in bringing Urdu language and literature to an international readership. Professor Emeritus of Islamic Studies and Urdu literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Memon taught at Sind University and then came to the U.S., where he received his M.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from Harvard University and a Ph.D. from UCLA in Islamic Studies with an emphasis in sociology, history, Arabic and Persian. His *Ibn Taimiya's Struggle against Popular Religion*, published by Mouton, The Hague, in 1976, is considered a pioneering study of the thought and practice of the thirteenth-century Hanbalite iconoclast Ibn Taimiya. Memon is also an internationally acclaimed translator and an accomplished fiction writer. He is on the editorial advisory board of *Edebiyat: Middle Eastern Literatures*, is General Editor of the Pakistan Writers' Series for Oxford University Press, and is also the Editor of *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, a print and on-line journal that aims to provide scholars working on Urdu language and literature a forum in which to publish scholarly articles, translations, and views.

A prolific writer, Memon has authored numerous articles critically examining Urdu fiction that have appeared in a number of professional journals, among them: *Modern Asian Studies*, the *Journal of Asian Studies*, the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Edebiyat*, etc. He has also translated and published a substantial body of contemporary Urdu fiction, of which several anthologies: *The Tale of the Old Fisherman*, *Domains of Fear and Desire*, *The Colour of Nothingness*, *An Epic Unwritten*, and *Do You Suppose It's the East Wind?* have appeared so far. He has also translated selections from the fictional works of individual writers including: Abdullah Hussein, *Stories of Exile and Alienation*; Hasan Manzar, *A Requiem for the Earth*; Intizar Husain, *The Seventh Door*; and Naiyer Masud, *Essence of Camphor* and *Snake Catcher*. His translations into Urdu include about a dozen novels by Western and Arab writers, besides numerous articles on Sufi metaphysics and Muslim philosophy. He retired in 2008 after a 38-year-long teaching career at the University of Wisconsin and is currently working on a volume which will showcase Urdu fiction by Indian writers.

AK: Would you care to talk about your early childhood? Did you know at that time what you wanted to do when you grew up? Did creative writing or teaching seem like a possible career?

MM: I was born in Aligarh, the last of my parents' six children. Ours was the only Memon family in town. One could write only "Memon" and "Aligarh" and the letter would reach us. Except for a sister who was 8 years my senior, all my other siblings left home soon after I was born. Growing up with a father 51 years older and always absorbed in some book, I went through a lonely and uneventful childhood and always carried a vague feeling of some unnamed sadness, which has dogged me throughout my life. I did have some friends though. I played the games then common among Indian boys. I've tinkered with a number of things during different periods of my life, such as painting, woodworking, macramé, making carved candles, and gardening (at one point I had 150 different varieties of African violets, and none of them were purchased; I used to pick up the fallen leaves of plants from nurseries or I asked for cuttings from friends and rooted them myself using a mixture of perlite and vermiculite). However, during the past two decades my main preoccupations have been just reading, writing, and gardening. Since retirement I've become quite reclusive. When I enter the house I hate to look at the telephone, fearing a red blinking light that will necessitate my returning some call. As I said in another recent interview, mine was an average life. I went through many of the same boyhood and adolescent experiences as other boys. There's no point in going over them now, though I might have done so quite eagerly a few decades ago when I didn't know better. Today such things seem not just insignificant but downright ridiculous. What is one life, after all, in the immensity of the universe?

Just to satisfy your curiosity—well, I did my high school at Aligarh and then we moved to Karachi in 1954. Out of my entire fifteen years in Aligarh—excluding a number of summers which we spent in our ancestral hometown Rajkot in Kathiawar, Swarashtra (the same place where, I believe, Mahatma Gandhi was born and where, during the waning days of the British Raj, the Ali Brothers spent some time in jail on sedition charges), where my parents owned a house—the nights of 1947 stand out in my memory. Partition took place while we were summering in Rajkot. When the time came for us to return to Aligarh, my mother stayed behind because of some scheduled minor foot surgery. On the way back, Father left my sister and me at the Delhi railway station and went to attend some meeting or conference in the city which had been planned earlier and Abul Kalam Azad had insisted on his participation. My father thought a railway station would be safer. My sister and I rode an emotional rollercoaster of fear during those two or three hours alone on the railway platform. Later we took the train to Aligarh which arrived safely, but we

subsequently learnt that the next one did experience some trouble and a few lives were lost. I said “the nights of 1947.” Although communal incidents were relatively few in the university area, our neighborhood on the fringe of it lived in anticipation of a sudden attack and had therefore mounted a big searchlight atop the roof of Manzur Sahib’s house, which is where we were to gather in case of an assault. One morning we were awakened in the wee hours and rushed to Manzur Sahib’s. It was a brutally cold night. I recall I was shivering down to my bones. There was no time to put on anything warm. An overcoat was just hurriedly thrown over my sleeping clothes and off we went, with me still in my slippers. Luckily the night passed without incident.

Did I have an idea what I wanted to do in the future? Well, some boys have a clear idea what they want to become when they grow up and we can look back to find traces of it in the choices they made and the things they did. I wasn’t like that. For me life was merely a moment in the present. Mine was an oppressively protected childhood. I liked playing cricket and *gilli-danda* with my friends, stealing mangoes and other fruits from university orchards on the way back from school, and swimming, and I didn’t stop to ask questions about the future. Maybe there was a future, but it was as remote and inaccessible as the princess in fairy tales. Actually, I never gave the future any thought.

Career? Big word! I don’t know. In retrospect, I might have wanted to follow in my father’s footsteps, I suppose. It wasn’t like I had a choice. But then, there wasn’t an absence of choice either. Just a colossal vacuity, normative, complete, real. Nothing existed beyond it. You moved into it, it moved by its own logic, without defining its course or purpose.

AK: Your entire professional training is in Islamic Studies, but your work during the last three decades has focused mainly on Urdu literature. Would you care to talk about it?

MM: There is a phrase in Urdu, “*kisii kii dukhtii rag par unglii rakhnaa.*” In English, one might say: “to touch someone’s raw nerve.” You have done just that. From my childhood I was interested in things which in our middle-class culture are regarded as a waste of time (*kaar-e be-kaaraan*): painting, reading stories, writing poetry, music, and such. Naturally this didn’t sit well with my father, an orthodox Muslim and renowned scholar of Arabic literature at Aligarh Muslim University. He wanted me to study Arabic. I hated it. But did I have a choice? So I went along, unable to rebel. After we moved to Pakistan in 1954, historian Mahmud Husain, brother of the former President of India, Dr. Zakir Husain, and Dr. Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, also an historian, although both were serving in Pakistan’s Ministry of

Education, asked my father to establish the Central Institute of Islamic Research, the same institute where the eminent Dr. Fazlur Rahman was to be later appointed as Director by Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan. While my father was in the process of establishing the Institute and gathering books for its library, and research work hadn't yet begun, Karachi University asked him to chair the Department of Arabic until the Institute had become fully functional. My father accepted the offer. I was then a B.A. student and I now had to face him in the formal setting of a class. You can imagine my plight. But things changed radically for me when he returned to the Institute and his own student, Dr. Syed Muhammad Yusuf, then teaching in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), was asked to take over. Dr. Yusuf was a brilliant man. He presented Arabic literature in such a delightful way that I gradually began to like it. I had never been a good student. Up to that point I had somehow managed. My heart was not into study, if study meant Arabic. But Dr. Yusuf so energized me and fired my imagination that I gave myself up to my studies, with the result that I stood first in order of merit in the entire faculty of arts (humanities) and did my B.A. with honors with high distinction and full scholarship for the M.A., which I completed in one year. My fate was sealed. That success decided my future profession, no ifs, ands, or buts.

But even as I cultivated my new-found love for Arabic, I never gave up my passion for Urdu, something I cannot rationally explain. During all this time I had been writing short stories on the sly and reading loads and loads of fiction. I have never read as much fiction in my later years as I did in those days: Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Mauriac, Mann, Salinger, Maupassant, Moravia, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor, Angus Wilson, Hemingway, William Saroyan, Durrell, you name it. And Urdu writers on top of all that.

In 1970, the University of Wisconsin offered me a job teaching Arabic in the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies and Persian in the Department of Indian Studies. In my second year of teaching, the latter department asked me to take over Urdu as well and move there full time. I had no professional degree in Urdu. It was a painful choice to make. Giving up Islamic Studies and Arabic spelled disaster. And in retrospect, I do sometimes feel that perhaps it was not a wise decision, but my attachment to Urdu proved irresistible, indeed fatal. When the offer was made, the urge to drop everything and embrace my love—openly, I might add—acquired something of an existential urgency. The rest of the story needs no telling.

Later, on my own, I introduced courses on Islamic religion and culture, Sufism, literatures of Muslim Societies and a few others so as not to cut myself loose entirely from Islamic Studies. These courses, more than those on Urdu, which al-

ways suffered from a deplorably low enrollment, really kept me alive intellectually. They were very well attended and I learned a lot myself while teaching them.

AK: Works such as *Essence of Camphor* and *Snake Catcher* by Naiyer Masud are creative literary amalgamations where the reader has to be attentive enough to grasp the hidden symbolism in the verses. Would you agree that such works are “double translations” for you? If so, how do you manage “double translation” work?

MM: Forgive me but sometimes I don't understand simple things. For instance, I don't quite understand “literary amalgamations” and “double translations.” But I have some vague idea of your drift. I hope I haven't misunderstood your import completely.

First, most Urdu fiction writers don't start their stories with epigrams, and not even Naiyer Masud every story. They do appear in some of his work, though. There they throw an oblique light on the feeling, the pervading mood of the work, which is what allusions and epigrams are supposed to do. Of course I cannot translate such poetic lines in all their semantic richness and conceptual beauty. But I try to transport the meaning.

AK: How did you become a writer? What inspired you to write and translate to bring Urdu literature to an international readership? In a candid interview Ahmed Faraz once said that “a ghazal can be written while sitting in a moving tonga, but a poem needs much more meditation? Similarly, do you have a “meditative regimen” that you follow? What prompted you to translate?

MM: To me a writer and a translator are two different things. They may coincide in a single person, but not necessarily. You talk about my being a writer with such finality. It gives me pause. Yes, I'm a writer in the most general sense, just as someone who writes an instructional manual for a Sony computer is a writer. In the sense of creative writer, I no longer am. I gave up writing fiction quite some time ago. Let's just say the “tapeworm” in my mind succumbed to the H1N1 virus all too soon. Now I'm only a translator, or mostly. How does one become a writer? And here I'm using “writer” in the restricted sense of one who writes fiction. Well, I can do no better than repeat the insights I have gained from Mario Vargas Llosa's delightful little book *Letters to a Young Novelist*. Writing is a vocation, a calling. One does not become a writer; one always *is*. By reading quantities of fiction one begins to notice the ingenuity of the writer in manipulating fictional material in order to assemble it into an artifact, an imaginative fabrication that strives to reach

its delineated narrative goal. In how they manipulate, they ultimately forge their own unique style.

What prompted me to translate? I used to translate even back in Pakistan. But then, in the same way as my creative writing, my translation work was not a matter of conscious choice. I can't give you any reason for it. Much of this activity moved to a conscious level when I came to the U.S. in 1964, but even then not really until 1970 when I started teaching at the University of Wisconsin. Between that time and now, I can see basically three reasons: practical, necessary, and emotional. While teaching Urdu fiction in translation at the UW, I had problems finding enough quality translations done with some thought to the chronological development of the short story form in Urdu. The existing material was in most cases unreliable and poorly done so I decided to translate. I later collected the resulting stories into my several anthologies (*The Tale of the Old Fisherman, Domains of Fear and Desire, The Colour of Nothingness, An Epic Unwritten*, and most recently *Do You Suppose It's the East Wind?*). So this was the practical reason.

The necessary reason—and I mean “necessary” in an existential sense—was my desire to let the West know that regardless of our deplorable performance in contemporary times, we have still jealously preserved a stout spirit of liberalism in the finer works of our imagination. Eventually what must define us is this liberalism. It will remain and withstand the test of time.

The purely emotional aspect is that I love Urdu—even though we are Memons whose language is Gujarati/Memoni and my mother, to her dying day, couldn't speak Urdu flawlessly. And though emotional, my love is not uninformed. I have a fairly good grasp of modern Arabic and Persian literature. Nothing like what our prose writers and poets had already achieved by the 1940s exists in early-modern Arabic and Persian, although we started to fall behind after the 1950s. It should come as no surprise that the first collection of modern Persian poetry was made by an Indian at Aligarh when modern poetry was still struggling for acceptance and recognition as a valid and viable form in Iran.

As to Ahmed Faraz's comment, well, it may be “candid,” but it is hype all the same, ill-informed and naïve at best, downright jejune at worst. I don't agree. Whether it is a ghazal, *nazm* or short story, all take a lot of thought—thought sometimes spanning years, even decades. One can be thinking while riding in a tonga (Ghalib sometimes used to compose in a latrine). Riding in tongas and “meditation” (I would prefer the word “thought” or “reflection”) are not mutually exclusive.

I don't know what a “meditative regimen” is. But I do know that even as a translator, my mind is never free—not even during my evening walks or when I'm shopping or driving (that really gives me the creeps)—from contemplating the semantic possibilities inherent in a translation I was working on last night, to find

what Flaubert would describe as the *mot juste* for a particular word in the translation at hand. Even during my lectures on Islamic culture I would surprise myself by incorporating insights gained from reading fiction, quite independently of my will, or a word I would use was the one I had chosen in a translation I was working on two days ago. Just multiply this process a hundredfold for a creative writer. Once the tapeworm of creativity invades the body it comes to effectively colonize the entire being of its victim. The two become inextricably fused. To illustrate this all-consuming preoccupation Llosa quotes his friend José María, who was afflicted by just such a bug (or *piir-e tasma-paa*):

We [i.e., the tapeworm and José María] do so many things together. We go to theaters, exhibitions, bookstores, we spend hours and hours discussing politics, books, films, friends. And you think I do these things for the same reason you do, because I enjoy them. But you're wrong. I do them all for it, for the tapeworm. That's how it seems to me: that my whole life is lived no longer for my sake but for the sake of what I carry inside me, of which I am now no more than a servant.

Maybe Ahmed Faraz discovered some novel way to send the ghazal-writer's bug on vacation.

AK: So why did you stop writing fiction?

MM: I now wonder why I ever started writing fiction in the first place. Back in the days of ignorance, it took so little to write because there was this urge but no understanding of what good writing involved. Of the several dozen stories I did write in those days, only two or three stand out. I'm not satisfied with the rest, which is not to say that my work was not received warmly. Actually, it was published in the highly regarded magazines of the time, *Savera*, *Adab-e Latif*, *Nuqush*, *Naya Daur*, *Saat Rang*, *Dastan-go*, *Nusrat*, to name only a few. I vividly remember that after reading one of my stories in *Saat Rang*, Muhammad Hasan Askari sent word to me through the editor to come see him. He probably saw something in the story and thought he could guide me. And he did indeed tell me a few things and gave me a few books to read, books mostly on the art of fiction.

In 1980 at Delhi, where I was invited to read a paper during a seminar, a middle-aged man from the audience came to see me during the session break. He

was not a scholar or anything of the sort he said, just an ordinary reader of literature. He wanted to tell me that he had read my short story “Tareek Galii” in the early 1960s and enjoyed it very much.

So it is not like the springs of creativity dried up because of critical inattention or a lack of appreciation. Even now I am sometimes surprised to see one of my old stories included in some anthology or selection.

What put a break on my writing were my studies in this country. There was no time to even think about writing anything. This was followed by the demands of an exacting professional life. When my life had acquired a more manageable rhythm, and I could write if I wanted to, I realized that I didn’t want to be just another writer and writing was an enormous responsibility. It demanded so much. It literally colonized you, in Llosa’s words. The more I probed into myself, the stronger the belief grew that I did not have the temperament, discipline, or perseverance of a writer. Few Urdu writers are professionals, in the sense that they earn a living by writing. I had never imagined myself as a professional writer. So the decision not to write was a relatively easy one to make. End of story.

AK: What is the symbolism in the titles you select for translation? For example, what is the significance of the “east wind” in your anthology of Pakistani stories *Do You Suppose It’s the East Wind*??

MM: I never thought there was any symbolism. Most of the titles come from one of the stories in the collection. Now it’s possible that the story’s title itself has an inherent symbolic content. For instance, “the east wind.” East wind is believed to refresh, at the same time it also brings with it a pensive and wistful mood, and a person may begin to reminisce. It simultaneously refreshes and opens up old wounds. There is another, highly accomplished story on the theme by the late Zamiruddin Ahmad. It is called “Purvaa’ii” (The East Wind).

AK: Urdu language has a poetic elegance and eloquence that is challenging to translate. As an accomplished translator of the Urdu language how do you overcome this challenge and how do you maintain the drama, humor and pathos of the storyteller and his characters?

MM: Quite a few questions rolled into one. Anyway, even as I love Urdu, I have a major problem with it—actually with us, writers of Urdu—especially when it comes to modern fiction, and even more especially when translating fiction. Let me elaborate: “poetic elegance” is a term that applies more aptly to Urdu poetry. Fiction, as we know it in the West, is a borrowed form into Urdu. It is created—as

perceptively remarked by the Palestinian-Israeli poet and novelist Anton Shammas who writes mostly in Hebrew—in the isolation of the individual, and is enjoyed, if I may add, by the reader in her or his own isolation. It is not something to be declaimed before an audience, like Urdu poetry, with its very rich tradition of *musha'ira*. Now the problem is that Urdu hasn't moved into the age of "literacy." To a large extent it is still in the phase of "orality." Its syntactical structure is more suited to oral presentation. A thing to be read, on the other hand, allows the writer immense freedom and also many possibilities to fully exploit the language and even integrate the very grammar and punctuation of the language to the narrative structure, to such a degree that if a given order were disturbed, the meaning of the story would inevitably suffer. Here the eye, more than the ear, is involved. Sound dies down quickly, the writing on the page stays. No matter how complicated and long a sentence may be, assuming all this satisfies the narrative need of the piece at hand, the eye can scan and rescan it until all the embedded meaning has emerged. The ear can't reproduce more than a few spoken words in the same exact sequence, so the sentences have to be kept fairly short and free of syntactical complexity.

So now if you want to translate such forms as the novel and short story, Urdu's existing syntactical structure, devised for oral presentation, becomes a handicap, to a degree. One can break up a long English sentence into small independent sentences in Urdu, but there is no way to translate it in its fullness into Urdu, which results in a woeful loss of intensity and richness. Add to this the arbitrary manner in which punctuation is used, rather misused. There are no fixed rules for it in Urdu.

The use of adjectives is another problem. Muhammad Hasan Askari has pointed this out eloquently and cogently in his article on the use of adjectives in Urdu. Of course there he is arguing for its inherent derivative character as an attribute of noun, lamenting the loss of a cultural (in his case, Sufi) metaphysics where noun is the essence and adjective just an attribute, ontologically devoid of substance and reality. Quite aside from his argument, what he says about the adjective shines some light on the problem at hand.

My other nagging problem is that while we have started writing fiction we have not paid much attention to developing a vocabulary for modern experiences and the expression of the feelings generated by those experiences (the fumbling attempts of the Muqtadira Qaumi Zaban notwithstanding) which, quite naturally, do not exist in the Urdu we have inherited. (No value judgment is involved here, just a statement of fact.) The situation is much better in modern Arabic and Persian. But then the Arabs and Iranians do not quarrel over language nor do they consider their languages inferior, while we still haven't adopted Urdu as our truly national language in this 62nd year of our independent existence. And since I have already opened this Pandora's box, something else pains me a lot. This is the ab-

sence of a decent, up-to-date, and user-friendly Urdu dictionary. I'm not denying the value of the *Urdu Lughat*, produced by the Urdu Dictionary Board. But imagine 22 humongous tomes, each weighing easily 10 pounds and elephantine in size. It is practically unusable, and it is only good up to a certain point. Even so, I asked Jamiluddin Aali, who was the director of the Board in 1998, and every successive director since, to think of putting this mammoth dictionary on a CD, but no luck. Why can't we come up with a useable work that incorporates all the new words that have entered the Urdu vocabulary in the last 100 years? We also need a dictionary of literary terms. I was recently translating a piece by Roger Boase about the Arab influences on European love-poetry and the term "courtly love" became a real headache to render adequately in Urdu. But not just literary terms, try to translate "calling" and "vocation" in the sense Llosa uses them, or the very common word "passion," or an everyday sentence such as "I've got a surprise for you" and you will know what I mean. I wish that when Jamil Jalibi Sahib produced his dictionary for the Muqtadira he had included some individuals, such as Muhammad Salim-ur-Rahman, experienced in translating modern Western fiction.

I might also mention here that often "eloquence" and "elegance" are no more than euphemisms for "ornate" and "florid." I hope you didn't mean it that way. In any case we need an eloquence and elegance born of simplicity and economy—a sharp, clean, cropped and stark language, and confidence in its ability to produce an effect. If you want to see such language at work, read Naiyer Masud's short stories. He shies away from using even adjectives and still manages to convey an effect which is simply amazing in its power. Another writer who consciously strove to write with austere language was Zamiruddin Ahmad.

I don't know whether I'm able to "maintain the drama, humor and pathos of the storyteller and characters." What I do know is that I try very hard and I'm aware of my frustrations and failures.

AK: What is the importance of translation to literature? As a writer, does your influence show in the translation? Similarly, how is your work influenced by the pieces you are translating?

MM: Well, I suppose, translation from another language allows us to experience the world, virtual or real, in ways we had never thought existed. I told you, I'm not a fiction writer anymore, whatever I may have gained from translation shows, rather, in who I have become and in everything I did as a teacher.

Translation of fiction especially is even more important for Urduwallahs. Many fictional forms have come to Urdu from the West. It will always be useful if our own fiction writers could see, if not in English, then at least in Urdu translation,

how far along these forms are in the West and how far they themselves still have to go. Good models always help, don't they?

AK: A question now about the politics of language. The general impression is that Urdu is a sophisticated urban language and often it is argued that the domination of the urban has prevented rural culture from coming into Urdu literature. How do you as a writer break those barriers? Previously in your interviews you have talked about the "secular traditions of Urdu literature." Could you explain what those traditions are?

MM: Let me answer by quoting a few lines from Intizar Husain's short story "An Unwritten Epic." The narrator of the story remarks: "'Literature is neither constructive nor destructive; it's just literature. [...] What is this animal called "constructive literature?" ... I've never yet seen anything destructive in literature. If literature isn't destructive, how can it be constructive?'"

Wouldn't you say there is wisdom in this remark? So let's disabuse ourselves right off the bat that "politics," "urban," "rural" are or can ever be literary terms and categories. They may tell you more about the academic needs of university campuses (*rootii to kisii taur kamaa khaa'e machhendar!*) than the inherent character or purpose of writing. A writer preeminently and necessarily fabricates, brings into being worlds that exist nowhere, worlds that only shimmer faintly in the complex and labyrinthine architecture of the imagination, along with all the vagaries and eccentricities of the writer. Fiction cannot transcend time, so some resemblance to a given time will always be there. But that is not the purpose of writing; it is the limitation of its medium, its form. I might even say that it is the limitation of prose. Milan Kundera has warned against reading his novels as history. They only strive toward exploring the existential situation of the character within the confines of the narrative, which is its whole world, quite independently of whether this world also has an analog in reality. Now if someone wants to theorize about politics, society and what not using the novel as the medium, well, good for them. But let's not think the product of their analysis is illuminating even the remotest corner of a creative work. I sometimes even wonder about literary criticism, which seems to me something derivative and reactive in nature, devoid of any ontological mass of its own. It can exist only laterally, always coming after what precedes it. A contingent existence at best.

So, it is the substandard author who writes a novel specifically to portray urban or rural culture, since these, at least in my opinion, cannot be the valid subject of a fictional work. They can be the space in which the story of the individual unfolds. What label are you going to stick on Naiyer Masud? Is his landscape rural?

Urban? None of these? Then what? Or take the warm and breathtakingly crafted story by Asad Muhammad Khan, “Burjiyan aur More” (Of Turrets and Peacocks). It is set in the red-light district of Karachi. Would you call it a story about the seamy side of a metropolitan culture? Or would you call it the story of a former veritable diva—stellar singer of *kajaris* in pre-Partitioned India, Laji Bai Aseergarhwali, who is reduced to being the Madam of a bordello in her new homeland—and the unflinching devotion of a bank officer, Mazhar Ali Khan, a real connoisseur of music, to this musical prodigy?

I have also regretted reading recently some stories by an Indian writer which were widely touted for their philosophical content. If that’s the case, why not write philosophy, especially when the venerable writer himself teaches philosophy at a university? Philosophy, per se, cannot be the subject of a story, but it can play a secondary role in providing insight about the personality of the story’s protagonist, provided it satisfies the narrative need and is subordinated to the story’s plot rather than riding roughshod over it. “Kafan” (Shroud), a story Premchand wrote towards the tail end of his life has always intrigued me. Contrary to the author’s view of fiction as a vehicle for social amelioration, the two main characters somehow get away from the writer’s avowed goal and attain a measure of independence. The rural, feudal setting is still there, and you can read it as a story of exploitation of the poor and the have-nots if you like. Granted, it doesn’t take much to detect the overt and covert moralizing of the writer, but in the end it is a story about two characters each with a distinct personality. They etch themselves relentlessly and inexorably on the reader’s consciousness, not what made them who they were. Though many of my students have felt dismayed by their crass lowliness and ethical bankruptcy and inhumanity, no serious reader can walk away gushing with hate for them. This is exactly what good writing does: it invites you to participate in a fabrication, a lie, a make-believe, not to sit in judgment about its morality. Precisely Esther’s attitude with regard to Lajos in the Hungarian novelist Sandor Marai’s *Esther’s Inheritance*, which must be its reader’s attitude too.

My basic gripe with the Urdu Progressives also springs from their overemphasis on social reality to the exclusion of the individual as a complex being hurled across time, history, and desire. Humans, in their writings, are brutally divested of their individuality and reduced to being mere instruments for the moral and economic reformation of society. But I don’t deny the very substantial contribution made by the Progressives. At the very least, they nudged the Urdu short story from its earlier cloying romanticism to a more recognizable human landscape. At the same time I might add that some fiction writers with a pronounced individual streak, working somehow under the umbrella of the Progressive Movement in the initial period, soon broke ranks with it precisely because of its tendency to force

literature into the suffocating cul-de-sac of societal causes. I do not subscribe to reading literature as a social document, for this never was its *raison d'être*. I would rather see it read as literature, as the possibility of human ingenuity and the urge to fashion worlds that exist in the imagination, and to make readers believe in its seductive fabrication by the sheer power of persuasion.

Once the true purpose behind fictional production is understood, it is clear that the description of what you have termed “rural culture” has not been suppressed in favor of “urban culture” in Urdu fiction. There are any number of writers who have written against the backdrop of rural life, Premchand preeminently. Hidayatullah Ansari and Ahmad Nadim Qasimi have also frequently structured their stories in rural settings.

Yes, I truly believe that Urdu literature is essentially liberal/secular in spirit. All you need to do is read classical poetry, preeminently the ghazal. Do you find in a Mir, Sauda, Momin or Ghalib any trace of narrow religiosity or what might be described in contemporary times as “fundamentalism”? You haven’t forgotten the plight of a *wa'iz* and a *shaikh* and a *zahid* in Urdu poetry? And Ghalib, who thinks that paradise is merely a figment of the imagination, something to amuse yourself with, and the entire universe no more than the span of a single stride before man’s indomitable, expansive desire? If this is not a secular spirit then what is? (The moment you move away from narrow religiosity and predestination and place your faith in human volition and freewill, you necessarily move into a liberal space. And the novel as a form, as perceptively remarked by Milan Kundera, was invented precisely to allow competing verities room to coexist in a single space, without any one truth trying to annihilate the other, and to doubt and question what Bakhtin would call the dialogic form.) All this in the premodern period to boot. And today ... well, for a trip to Pakistan I once randomly picked two books from my library to read on the long plane ride. One was Witold Gombrowicz’s *Pornografia*, a novel I had bought in 1964 but for some reason hadn’t yet read. The other was a more recent addition, *L'Abbe C*, the first work, a novella, of the erotic writer Georges Bataille. Both played out against tensions existing between faith and whatever else that is not faith. Nothing like this exists in Urdu fiction. Religion doesn’t make even an appearance, however hesitant and tentative or fleeting, is not even a bit player in much of Urdu fiction, but it is hard to read much of Western literature and walk away feeling that it isn’t in some way foreshadowed by some religious impulse, imaginative or reactive. Please don’t misunderstand me, I’m not suggesting that Western literature is “fundamentalist” in essence or champions ecclesiastical authority, but only that, by comparison, Urdu literature has in its greater part shown a marked indifference to religious themes as they inform and shape individual lives and propel them toward an autonomous narrative goal. I guess this has something

to do with the very notion of literature that predominated Muslim culture. Literature, here, was anything but a representation of reality, or mimesis, an activity that found its principal justification, as much as its domain, in the imagination. Maybe some residual element of that attitude toward literature still persists with us. I may have felt disappointed by our contemporary fiction but not on account of its preoccupation with religion or religious themes.

It is amazing, in our day-to-day existence, religion—Islam—plays such an overbearing role and yet none of our writers have attempted to write a major, expansive novel in which conflicts between religious and personal morality are acted out in the lives of characters in a major way, just as happens, for instance, in the lives of the two brothers, Robert, a priest, and Charles, a libertine, in Bataille's *L'Abbe C*. Sometimes I regret this absence profoundly. Of course I'm aware of Nazir Ahmad's didactic novels, but they do not deal with religious conflicts and should be considered exceptions.

Urdu poetry may have borrowed many of its conventions from Persian, but Urdu as a language is purely Indian. Even its former name was Hindvi, Gujri, and what have you. Since I work with translation, I can tell you something which might surprise you. Notwithstanding the claims that Urdu is a Muslim language (as if it were anointed in Mecca), it is amazing that the entries for eight specific Arabic letters, from *suad* to *qaaf*, take up a total of 56 pages in John T. Platts' 1259-page dictionary, some letters no more than one or two pages, while *gaaf* alone occupies 52 pages. My own feeling is that about 80 percent of Urdu vocabulary is Indian in origin. No wonder that some of the greatest writers of Urdu, until roughly 1947, have also been Hindus and Sikhs, and not in negligible numbers. Muslims should have shown some maturity and clear-headedness in claiming it as a Muslim language. This is an example of linguistic nationalism retroactively applied. Of course it is too late now. I need not tell you the plight of Urdu in India, where it may or may not die eventually, but it will continue on in Pakistan torn from its cultural and literary moorings. In a recent e-mail from Karachi, one gentleman wrote to me "Ji zaroor mein ap ko akhbar *send* kar don ga [*italics, mine*]." A future Ghalib will write in this language. Lest you think I'm against borrowing vocabulary from another language and assimilating it to one's own, actually, languages rarely borrow verbs, but mostly nouns and adjectives. I can think of only "filmaanaa" from "to film" in Urdu. There may be a few more, but not many.

AK: Do you see yourself as a social realist, as someone whose primary aim is to depict the existing social relationship of time or space? Your translation work is quite varied in nature. How do you select works for translation?

MM: I don't want to be a realist, socialist or any other kind of "ist." I just want to read fiction, and not as an analog of reality but as an unexplored terrain existing in its distinct mode of being. Since I no longer write fiction, fortunately I'm excused from bearing such immense responsibility. But, as I said earlier, fiction will reflect to some degree or other the nature of social relationships particular to a time and space, but only obliquely, not as its principal objective.

Actually, reading is an enjoyment for me and, generally speaking, sometimes what I like to read I also feel like translating. More specifically, my translations from Urdu fiction were done (1) to teach courses, and (2) to give the West some idea about modern Urdu fiction and its producers. The things I've translated into Urdu are either fiction or articles dealing with Sufi metaphysics and the intellectual contributions made under the aegis of Muslim—Islamic if you will—culture, as reflected in literature, philosophy and science. One other major reason was to regain some control over the Urdu idiom, which was fast slipping from my hands.

AK: Could you talk about literary labels, for instance "colonial," "post-colonial," "Third World," and so on? How does one move beyond these labels? What are the importance/ significance of such labels?

MM: From my vantage, none of this is in the nature of a literary category. Then again, I'm not sure a writer sets out to write a "colonial" or "post-colonial" novel. These are labels appended to the work by those who do not look at the work as existing in its own autonomous imaginative space. Take for instance much of Nayer Masud's work. Could you say that any one of the five stories in his collection *Seemiya* is located in any known geography? His minimalist, threadbare prose is culturally neutral and non-specific, without the least precipitation of any kind of rhetoric, and yet is charged with a stunning emotional energy, such that it overwhelms without being mushy. So where, exactly, would you locate his clinically sterilized fictional landscape? No Urdu critic has succeeded, to my knowledge at least, in determining the *meaning* of his fictional world, yet none has walked away from it without *feeling* its overwhelming, grim existential weight. And how would one classify Kafka? Yes, one may say that his work is his emotional response to objective reality as he experienced it, but none of the features of this external life are discernible in his work. And what will you say about the very ordinary office

clerk Munawwar Khan, the protagonist of Muhammad Salim-ur-Rahman's short story "Siberia." He is mortally afraid of some unspecified but palpable fear and, while returning from work one evening, sees snowflakes drifting down relentlessly in a city where it has not snowed since the beginning of time? A city at the back of beyond, in a country we know nothing about, in a century which looks like our own simply because we think so? Except for the snowflakes, every last detail in the story is exactly a mirror image of objective reality—a snapshot taken through a powerful lens. Yet the picture emerging from the developer distorts this reality beyond recognition because of the psychological/emotional solutions it has passed through. The distortion creates a reality more credible than objective reality itself. You may read it as a story of political oppression if you like, but you have no proof to support it. All this transaction between the writer and his reader takes place in the fictional realm, a realm in which our label-makers will find no purchase, and is credible and meaningful even in one's failure to comprehend it clearly. So you see, the minute you concede to the autonomous existence of fiction and look for its coordinates in its native soil, and analyze it using critical concepts and categories organic to its mode of being, you inevitably realize that none of the labels you have enumerated help much. A writer is just a writer; his relationship with his work does not change depending on whether he comes from the "First World" or the "Third." Basically the same urge propels the individual to write, regardless of where he or she may be situated: the urge to fashion a world different than the real one, because the latter makes him uneasy, because it is lacking in some way or other. The writer cannot change the real world, but he can create an imaginative world according to his specific blueprint.

AK: You were a participant of a unique scholarly panel entitled "Literary Responses to Political Events: Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Urdu Literatures." Could you elaborate on what the literary response to political events is? Considering the last few years of Pakistan's political cataclysm what has been the literary response?

MM: Actually, I organized that panel in what I now look upon as my "days of ignorance," in my innocence, yielding to the imperatives and pressures of academic life, when I didn't know any better. I had written an article on how the event of 1971, when Pakistan split, was perceived in Urdu fictional writing. I had read a book by H. Stewart Hughes about intellectuals and intellectual history. It's all very hazy now, but the thought that political events are foreshadowed in creative writing much before their occurrence appealed to me and I wanted to analyze Urdu fiction to see what reverberations of the coming storm could be felt. (The article was later

published in the *Journal of Asian Studies*.) Then I became ambitious, all right, curious. How do Iranian, Arab, and Turkish creative writers deal with political events. Hence I decided to organize a panel during the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association on this theme. Noor Yalman of Harvard ran overtime and I didn't even get to present my paper.

Since the topic no longer interests me, I haven't tried to pursue it, so I wouldn't be able to tell you what treatment current events have received in Urdu fiction, other than to give you a very general impression. My feeling is that Pakistani Urdu fiction has mostly steered clear of dealing with political events, quite apart from the question of whether political events in themselves can or ought to be the subject of fiction. The situation is somewhat different among Indian Urdu writers. Salam Bin Razzack, Syed Muhammad Ashraf, Ali Imam Naqvi, and others have written some excellent stories which may be considered to have resulted from their experience of communal riots, the Babri mosque incident, etc. But a marked difference can be seen in the way they have creatively handled the material compared to the way in which the majority of Urdu writers, except Saadat Hasan Manto, Asfaq Ahmad, and Rajinder Singh Bedi, dealt with the Partition of India in 1947. A political event can be used in fiction, but not for its own sake, to send a message. What needs to be done instead is exploit the event's creative potential to achieve a narrative goal. Razzack, Ashraf, and Naqvi do just that. They have produced stories that are accomplished works independently of any message. Even regarding the breakup of Pakistan, I cannot think of any equally accomplished work produced by Pakistani writers, with the sole exception of Masud Ashar's "Of Coconuts and Chilled Bottles of Beer."

AK: In Western literature the experience of prison has been an important contribution to the many academic debates and disciplines that utilize prison letters for theoretical support. Antonio Gramsci's strikingly vivid letters for example have illuminated ideas on politics, philosophy, literature and social theory. Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Ahmed Faraz contributed in somewhat the same manner for Urdu prose. Why did you decide to translate Gramsci and Leo Tolstoy rather than Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Ahmed Faraz when they too provide penetrating look into the intellectual, spiritual and political ethos during their tribulations as political prisoners in Pakistan? Would you consider translating their works?

MM: When I read Gramsci's prison letters, I was overwhelmed and overawed by his immense erudition, his razor-sharp perception and what all he was able to accomplish in the dreary confines of a slammer in extremely poor health. I have seen

Faiz from up close, back in Hyderabad when I taught at Sind University and he came to participate in a *musha'ira*. Yes, he is a poet well liked by people, and yes, he also went to prison. And, yes, I've read his prison letters, but the thought that I might translate them never crossed my mind. However, back in the early 1960s, after Faiz returned from his trip to Cuba, he wrote a series of very penetrating articles on Cuban life that were published in the newspaper *Jang*. I was profoundly affected by his insights. I might translate them. Don't misunderstand me. I too have enjoyed and loved his poetry, mostly when I was a young man. I now feel that his poetry is too accessible for my comfort. It leaves no distance between itself and the reader. When that happens, I'm afraid a poet becomes dated. This does not happen with Ghalib.

Anyway my choices tend to be quite whimsical. I just liked Gramsci. The man had not the slightest trace of obscuring lyricism or maudlin self-pity. On the contrary, he had an endearingly steely resolve, an obsessive desire to learn, a discipline the likes of which are not easily found. A rock-solid and authentic personality right down to the hilt, so I selected a few letters and translated them, as my homage to a profound genius. I must admit I'm woefully ignorant of Ahmed Faraz's prison letters, and somewhat happy in my ignorance. Now and then a line of his poetry glows for me, and shocks me with its perceptive brilliance, its sheer poetic luster.

AK: You have been editing *The Annual of Urdu Studies* for a number of years now. How do you manage such a voluminous yearly publication?

MM: Next year we will be publishing our 25th issue. Managing it hasn't been easy, and I might have folded it up years ago had it not been for the uncommon dedication and devotion of my assistant, Jane Shum. Without her diligence and prodigious sense of responsibility, I wouldn't have managed to continue publishing. Our constant problem is finances. So far we have been lucky. For a few years the Center for South Asia at the University of Wisconsin helped us a bit. Later the University's College of Letters and Science and its Graduate School gave me a 33 percent-time project assistant, but this support was withdrawn a few years ago because of the University's fiscal problems across the board. Fortunately the support from AIPS has been unwavering and quite substantial from the start, although for the past three years I've been frequently warned that the AIPS may not be able to support it in the future. This is a very real possibility. When that happens, I will have no choice but to close it down. Who knows, the 25th issue may be our last. As you probably know, the *AUS* is a not-for-profit enterprise. We can barely recover the cost of printing from the sales, which were never substantial to begin with and have steadily dwindled since we put the journal on the web free of charge, a move necessitated

by the economic condition of our South Asian readers. We have also not raised the price of the journal itself (sometimes as many as 700 pages and usually not less than 400) since 1993. The only increases have been to try to offset, as much as possible, the never-ending increases in postage for shipping. What is deplorable is that many university libraries have canceled their subscriptions just because it is now available for free on the web. And it might surprise you to know that Urduwallahs, otherwise vociferous in defending Urdu, are the least inclined to buy it just to keep it afloat, the worst culprits being the Pakistanis. Not a single educational institution or individual in all of Pakistan buys a copy. All the copies sent there are gratis. On the other hand, half a dozen libraries in India, including a Sikh library and one in Maharashtra, do buy it, and now and then an individual subscription from India also wanders in. Another major problem is the dearth of high-quality scholarly articles. This is a constant headache.

AK: Are there other volumes in the pipeline for the Oxford University Press's Pakistan Writers' Series for which you serve as the General Editor?

MM: Let me give you a little background on this series. In 1998—or was it 1996?—the OUP asked me for publication ideas. Among other possible projects, I suggested a series on Pakistani writers because they deserved attention and recognition before anything else. I wasn't sure OUP would accept it, and least of all ask me to serve as editor for it. But this is precisely what they eventually did. I accepted but it didn't take long for frustration to set in. By Pakistani writers I had meant just that, writers in all genres and all languages of Pakistan, including English. OUP wanted me to edit only Urdu fiction. Anyway, I managed 7 volumes despite formidable problems, finding good translators being the most daunting one. Few Pakistani's who write good English are interested in translating from Urdu, especially for a fee that only amounts to peanuts. And fewer still are crazy enough to do it just for the love of Urdu. Among others, I had selected Fahmida Riaz's novella *Godavari*. I first asked Aamer Hussein and he accepted, but later I couldn't even get him to respond to any of my many letters, much less deliver the translation. Then I approached Umber Khairi. She also accepted, translated a few pages and then bowed out. I next asked my friend Juan Cole, who knows Urdu and was willing to do it with his wife, who is a Pakistani. If you know anything about Juan, you will know what a big name he is in Middle Eastern Studies and how busy. He had translated some 50 pages when tragedy struck. Fahmida ended up in Michigan, saw him, found out about the translation and recited her tale of woes and the need to have the translation "pdq." That's when he wrote to me saying that, after learning how important the translation was for Fahmida's immediate plans, he realized he could not do it fast enough to sat-

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isfy her. He was willing to give me the 50 pages and let someone else carry on. So that was that. Just to coordinate the activity exhausted me. So now the series is in limbo or suspended animation. My friend Faruq Hassan and I have now translated enough stories of Ikramullah to fill a volume. As soon as I can find the time to edit it, we may end up with volume 8, but what will come after that, or indeed whether anything will come at all, only God knows.

AK: Now that you are retired, what next?

MM: Actually, I'm busier than when I was teaching. I now have the time to do what I want. At the moment I'm trying to put together a special section on Urdu writing from India for *Words Without Borders*, a web magazine of world literature, which I've been invited to guest edit. It will feature a few stories by old masters but the balance will comprise writing by post-1947 and especially more recent writers, plus some poetry. Eventually I want to expand this project and publish a whole volume, mostly my translations. The next is to polish my Urdu translation of Toshihiko Izutsu's delightful little book *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy*. I have already translated half a dozen other essays on certain Muslim philosophers and the transmission of Muslim philosophy to the West. Then I have Llosa's book, which I mentioned elsewhere and five or six other novels that need to be cleaned up and published. So, you can see, my plate is full. But I'm happy when I'm busy doing what I enjoy most.