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WRITERS THROUGH V.S. NAIPAUL'S TRAVELOGUES**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UNIVERSITY, LAHORE**

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HUMAIRA KALSOOM AND ASIM KARIM

1

**POLITICS OF PRAGMATISM: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL
UNDERSTANDING**
BASHARAT HUSSAIN

34

**THE REPRESENTATION OF MARITAL LOVE IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S
*TO THE LIGHTHOUSE***
SAJJAD ALI KHAN

45

**SITUATING SUBALTERN STRUGGLE IN NAJAM HOSSEIN SYED'S
*PLAY AWEIN NA HAI OH GAL***
GHULAM ALI SHAIR AND UMAIR AYUB KHAN

68

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ABSTRACT

The recurring dilemma for the underdeveloped, third world and recently freed post colonial society is how to ward off those identities which were imposed upon them by their colonial lord. Their representation is still in jeopardy as a reminiscent of the tradition of the orientalism that actually defined those societies for their own western understanding. Even the understanding of such societies by the post colonialist is often critiqued to be bequeathed by the colonial imagery. V.S. Naipaul represents such a native writers who are living at the confluence of the both tradition. The trilogy of him that is evaluated in this article is actually an attempt to revisit the understanding of India by an author who verily represents the native characteristic.

KEY WORDS

Colonial, Postcolonial, Orientalism, Travelogues, India.

The knowledge about India or the sub continent has been produced with the pre conceived notion of the orientalist writers. This discursive approach of perceiving India has been subjected to a lot critique. This formulation of perceiving India through orientalists has been exposed to the futility when juxtaposed with the local traditions and writings by the locals. It is pertinent and important to explain the orientalism and orientalists thoughts as propagated by the them. As they perceive and present the orient significantly as a system of representations and identity predominantly formed through the intervention of the political forces in the western learning. "It is a way of coming to terms with the orient that is based on the orient's special place in European western experience. The orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest, richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the "other".

It is characterized as backward, passive, despotic and inferior. According to Vico and Italian philosopher says, also expounded by the Said, that such regions and geographical sectors as "orient" and "occident" are men made orient is and idea that has a historical perspective and it has given it a presence in the west like a form of knowledge. Said summarized his work in these terms:" My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness. . . . As a cultural apparatus

Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge."¹

This article deals with Naipaul's travel books about *India: An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. This trilogy analyses three different stages of the decolonization era in India. Along with portraying social, cultural and political maladies, Naipaul has minutely dissected the general attitudes and habits of the general masses of India that have prevented her from becoming a truly modern state. Naipaul's basic focus is upon the contradictions in the Indian society that have blocked Indians' way to future progress. These travelogues also reveal Naipaul's evolving perception about his ancestral homeland.

In postcolonial era travel writing has emerged as the most important literary genre as it provides cultural dissection of the postcolonial societies. In colonial era, travel writing was considered an important literary genre, as European travel writers went to the different colonial regions and evaluated those colonial territories through travel writing. European travel writers basically used it for colonialist purpose by portraying the backwardness of the colonized countries that according to them were in dire need of civilizing power. Postcolonial travel writing has emerged as a counter to the colonialist travel writing that depicted them as 'other'. Postcolonial travel writing often deals with correcting the false pictures of their societies presented by the European travel writer.

In the decolonization era, the travel writers have been visiting the former British colonies to gauge the impact of colonialism and imperialism in these societies and also to discern transformations in these societies that

took place after receding of colonialism. A travel writer is influenced by disciplines such as geography, history and anthropology etc. Naipaul created a new genre by combining factual, fictional, biographical, and autobiographical elements. In these travelogues, he is least interested in depicting the picturesque scenes. His main concern is the masses of the Third World countries. These travels also provided him a chance to encounter the various people and know their opinions. He has fused fiction and travel narrative in these books about India. "These texts represent the new genre paradigm, which have strong autobiographical component and rely heavily on the use of memory as a valid travel paradigm."²

These travels served two purposes. On the one hand, these journeys led to dissection of the Third World decolonized society, going under the process of devolution, on the other hand these travels helped him to discover his self. In *Finding the Centre*, Naipaul acknowledges:

I travel to discover other states of mind, and if for this intellectual adventure I go to places where people live restricted lives, it is because my curiosity is still dictated by my Colonial Trinidad background. I go to places which however alien, connect in some way what I already know.³

Naipaul's travel books have been criticized by critics for presenting the Third World societies as 'other' and adopting European norms to judge his own people. In spite of being a member of this Third World, his travel books have been considered harsh critique of these half

formed societies. Different critics have argued that Naipaul's main concern in his travelogues is to observe the assimilation of Western norms and values in these decolonized societies. In fact by depicting the wretched picture of these Third World societies, he wishes to make his own people realize the misery of their condition. These people, decades after the demise of colonialism from their societies, have still not brought any improvement in their societies. He dismisses the European authors, who depicted India as a land of myth and magic. His approach to India and its problems is quite realistic. Naipaul passionately desires improvement in these countries. His negative judgment about India reveals his deep concern for the future of Indian nation. To cite Champa Rao Mohan:

It is clear that Naipaul's brutal analysis of the postcolonial societies is meant as a kind of shock treatment which he believes is necessary to pull the ex-colonies out of their complacency and make them accept responsibility for themselves because it is only then that decolonization in its real sense can become possible.⁴

Naipaul's journeys have been from periphery to center and also from center to periphery. These journeys widened his vision and provided him a chance to have a realistic view of these societies. Naipaul's first journey was from periphery to center, when in 1950, the Trinidadian government awarded him scholarship to study in Britain, where he had a chance to have a closer look at the metropolitan center.. *The Middle Passage* written in 1961 explores the country of his birth, the Caribbean society. So

his decision to travel India was an urge to find a country with which he could identify himself. As in *An Area of Darkness*, he mentions that in Britain, he was scared of the end of immigrants there. The time span between the departure of Naipaul's ancestors from India and Naipaul's arrival in India is about 60 years. Naipaul decided to go to India to explore his ancestral roots.

This trilogy covers the period of almost thirty years. Naipaul visited India thrice to explore fully the country of his origin. Naipaul visited India for the first time in 1961. *An Area of Darkness* evaluates his first impression of his motherland. As a child the India was for the Naipaul a collection of some artifacts, that he narrates as; "grimy, tattered string-bed, the straw mat, the brass vessels, the wooden printing blocks, the coarse oil books, the ruined harmonium, the brightly colored pictures of deities, the images, the stick of sandalwood."⁵ These featureless things were an area of darkness for him later he applies that darkness to the Indian life that is marked with death, a negation, distortion.⁶ He revisited India in 1975 during the period of Emergency imposed upon the country by Indira Gandhi. The Emergency period was a crucial period in Indian history, in which there was ban on the political activities and all the civilian rights were suspended. Naipaul evaluated that period in *India: A Wounded Civilization*. Naipaul visited India for the third time in 1988 and discerned transformations taking place in the Indian society. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* gives a vivid description of his third visit to India. These travel books about India are more than a graphic record of decolonization era in India. Naipaul also takes into

consideration the historical perspective and also tries to understand what lies ahead in the future for India.

Naipaul's ancestors were immigrants from Uttar Pradesh, east of India, who went to Trinidad to work as indentured labourers in the cane fields. Trinidad, where Naipaul grew up was a multi-racial and multi-cultural society that mainly comprised of immigrants. Indian people, who were a minority there, had great adherence to Hindu rituals and traditions. These Indians tried their utmost to retain their Indian distinctiveness in multi-racial and multi-cultural society. Naipaul in his "Nobel Lecture," stated about his life in Trinidad that "we had brought a kind of India with us."⁷ Naipaul's grandparents had great association with India, and while leaving for Trinidad, they took along with them so many things from India. Even the house that they built in Trinidad was quite different from the other houses there because it was totally built on the Indian style. Naipaul was brought up in an Indian atmosphere, where all the immigrant form India regardless of their cast, class, religion, shared the communal sense of Indian identity. Naipaul fantasized about India from a very early age. For Naipaul, India remained a mythic and legendary place until he visited India in 1961, when "instead of a land of achievement, he finds it another fractured and wounded culture."⁸

In fact his travels to India reveal to him the contradiction between the image of India he formed in Trinidad and the real India. In Trinidad all the people belonging to India, irrespective of their class, cast or religion, had communal feelings of being Indian. But in India he finds divisions among the people based on cast, class, clan and religion. In Trinidad, Indians had great

adherence to the Hindu rituals but in India he finds people's lack of concern about the Hindu rituals. He is shocked to find that as in Trinidad, they lit clay lamps on Diwali, while in India, he finds people lighting candles and electric lamps on Diwali. In Trinidad, people felt pride in considering India their motherland but here he finds people's wish to be identified by their cast, class, religion, language etc.

Naipaul named his first visit to India *An Area of Darkness*, echoing Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad's influence is quite evident in Naipaul's writing. Naipaul views Conrad in different way from Achebe, who has called Conrad a racist. In his essay "Conrad's Darkness and Mine," Naipaul admitted that he was influenced by Conrad because he projected "a vision of world's half made societies as places which continuously made and unmade themselves, where there was no goal."⁹ Conrad employed the metaphor of darkness for Africa, considering it a place devoid of all civilized values and enlightenment. Naipaul has mainly used the metaphor of darkness for India to refer to the stereotypical attitudes of the Indian people.

This trilogy is imbued with intensely personal experience of an exile person, who is adrift in the world, looking for his roots that might imbue him feelings of security in the world. Naipaul himself appears to be the main subject of his travelogues. His own background of being a diasporic Indian is very important in evaluating these travel books. His visit to India was an endeavor to confirm the image that he had formed in Trinidad. In his fiction too, Naipaul has mostly depicted the East Indians exiles, trying to adjust themselves in an alien

environment. The fictional and non-fictional works of Naipaul reveal the personal insecurity of the author, who in spite of belonging to the three societies always felt himself insecure, whether it was Trinidad, Britain or India. Edward Said in *Reflections on Exile*, expresses his view: "Exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid or secure."¹⁰ So these travel books depict the psyche of a diasporic person, who is looking for security by finding an identity. These travelogues about India reveal the complex response of the author, who faces the trauma of belonging to a place and estrangement from it. Naipaul himself acknowledges: "India for me is a difficult country. It is not my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it...I'm at once too close and too far." (*India: A Wounded Civilization*, 8) Even before coming to India, Naipaul had a desire to be identified as Indian and a desire to get away from Indian identity. While he was studying in Britain, he wrote a letter to his sister mentioning that by looking at his picture, he had the realization that his face was fat that gave away the fact of being an Indian. His reaction to Indian values, culture and society depicts his love-hate relationship with India. He himself acknowledges that India proved difficult country for him. This also reveals his split psyche having repulsion and attraction for the Indian civilization. As Manjit Inder Singh endorses: "Naipaul finally has come to represent the split psyche of a traveller, the attraction- repulsion syndrome, and the excitement-exhaustion cycle of the diasporic mind engaged in perpetual reconstruction of his diasporic self."¹¹ This duality of feelings has been due to juxtaposition of the India of his imagination and the real

India. While in Trinidad, Naipaul always wished to escape from that place. Everything that Trinidad lacked, he hoped to find in India. Since childhood, he felt affiliation with India and constructed his own image about it. As he states in *An Area of Darkness*:

And India had in a special way been the background of my childhood. It was the country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real, a country out in void, beyond the dot of Trinidad, and from it our journey had been final.¹²

But in Bombay, when he realizes that he has become part of the crowd as people do not seem to take notice of him as an outsider, he feels that he has lost his identity and distinctiveness. In his book *India: A Million Mutinies Now* he present Bombay a city with crowd and slow, he further explains futility in Indian life that is on the face very bright but inside is dirty:

The shops, even when small, even when dingy, has big, bright signboards Often, in front of these shops, and below those signboards, was just dirt; from time to time depressed-looking, dark people could be seen sitting down on, this dirt and eating, indifferent to everything but their food.¹³

The people whom he meets in Uttar Pradesh, he is unable to reciprocate their cordiality. He feels himself alienated from these people, their values and culture. He views his own people from Eurocentric and Orientalist perspective, discerning the 'otherness' of these people. Naipaul reaches India with pre-conceived idea of his

intimacy with India, he is shocked to discover “that he is an exile in the motherland.”¹⁴ Paradoxically, while trying to find his intimacy with the Indian society, he is only able to discover his own distance from it. During his first visit, he wishes that he should not have decided to come to India that has divided his life into two. Naipaul admits: “The land of my fantasy and heart was something lost and was irrecoverable.” (*India: A Million Mutinies Now*, 491)

Naipaul’s feeling of being a rootless person in all three societies, Trinidad, Britain and India portrays the condition of a self-exile person, who tries to find the world of his own making and when he fails to do that, it results in his mental alienation from all three societies. Naipaul feels himself on the margin in every society, whether it is country of his birth, Trinidad or the country of his education Britain or the country of his origin, India. In the fiction *A Way in the World* this state of mind has been elaborated in this way: “We all inhabit a ‘construct’ of a world. Ancient people had their own, our grandparents had their own, we cannot absolutely enter into their construct.”¹⁵ Naipaul has been placed in the category of intellectual exile by Edward Said because according to him in this way exile stands as a metaphorical condition, in which the individual wants to remain outside the mainstream and always remains an unaccommodated person. While evaluating Naipaul with regard to this theory he says:

To some degree the early V.S. Naipaul, the essayist and travel writer, resident off and on in England, yet always on the move, revisiting his Caribbean and Indian roots, sifting through the debris of colonialism and post colonialism,

remorselessly judging the illusions and cruelties of independent states and the new true believers, was a figure of modern intellectual exile.¹⁶

Naipaul's dilemma is that wherever he goes, he fails to find places according to his own 'construct' that result in his mental alienation from all the societies. He admitted that he never felt himself at home in West Indian society and even in the metropolitan center, the same feelings persisted. Now to discover a society with which he could identify himself, he comes to India. His travel to India can be considered a process of self discovery, where he discovers that he is not the part of the Indian society because he does not find India according to his 'construct'.

In *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul's hysterical reaction experienced at different occasions has been mentioned many times. The reason of his frustration is the bitter self awareness that he neither feels any affiliation with the land of his ancestors nor does he want to admit his Indian identity. Richard Cronin comments: "He [Naipaul] looks at alien cultures as into a mirror, tense with the fear that he will not find there any comforting reflection of his own humanity, that the mirror will be empty and he will start to scream."¹⁷ Naipaul experiences hysteria while discerning the moral and physical degradation of the human beings as he himself says: "Men had been diminished and deformed, they begged and whined and hysteria had been my reaction." (*An Area of Darkness*, 13)

This trilogy also reveals Naipaul as a Brahmin, wishing for purity and order in the individual's life and in

the societies. This also shows conflict between the real life and the demands of being a Brahmin. The cast hierarchy that placed Brahmins in the respectable position in the society was missing in Trinidad. In India, Brahmins were treated in quite a different way from other communities.

There was even leniency in the law for the Brahmins and they were often exempted from the severe punishments. But in Trinidad, the conditions were quite different. Naipaul's ancestors in spite of belonging to the Brahmin hierarchy had to face humiliation of working as indentured labourers. They lived in Trinidad without any status and were always scared of the Negroes, who were in majority there. In "Prologue to an Autobiography," while mentioning his early days in Port of Spain, Naipaul writes: "Disorder within and disorder without. Only my school life was ordered; anything that had happened there, I could date at once. But my family life—my life at home and my life in the house, in the street was jumbled without any sequence."¹⁸ In fact it was search for order in life and the society, he always aspired for. But India, instead of being a land of order and purity, presents a picture of fragmentation and chaos.

Having experience of British colonialism, Naipaul has specific interest in evaluating the impact of British colonialism in different societies. He is also interested in finding transformations in these societies after the withdrawal of British colonialism. Naipaul visited India after few decades of India's independence from the British rulers. India could not remain a stable country after getting independence from the British rulers. Post Nehru period was a period of great upheaval in the country. Independence was soon followed by the problems like

poverty, corruption, sectarian violence, etc. Instead of making any progress, independence only led to chaos and fragmentation in the society. India that comprises of a number of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious varieties lost a center in the form of British colonialism. In India, Naipaul reaches the conclusion that it were British, who brought enlightenment in the subcontinent that was lost in barbarism. Here Naipaul seems to favour colonialist perspective, described by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* that British had the view: "certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination."¹⁹ In his travel books, Naipaul again and again mentions British contribution to impart civilization to the Indian society. In *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul asserts that "it was Europe that revealed India's past to India and made it veneration part of Indian nationalism." (*An Area of Darkness*, 206). During his third visit, when he went Calcutta, he observed the dilapidated condition of the people he asserts: "When British ceased to rule, the city began to die". (*India: A Million Mutinies Now*, 283) The same view point has been expressed by Naipaul in *India: A Wounded Civilization*: "But all the disciplines and skills that India now seeks to exercise are borrowed. Even the ideas Indians have of the achievement of their civilization are essentially the ideas given them by the European scholars in the 19th century." (*India: A Wounded Civilization*, 129)

Naipaul clearly differentiates between the Muslim rule in India and the British colonialism. As Bruce King evaluates: "He [Naipaul] claimed that the Muslim invasion stupefied India, whereas British imperialism made India part of the modern world."²⁰ Naipaul believes that purity of Indian civilization was contaminated by its encounter with the

Muslim civilization. He particularly mentions the Mughal rule in India as the worst period in India's history. According to Naipaul's view, during Mughal rule, Hindus were kept backward. As these ruler's only object was to conquer India, so they were least interested in bringing any reform in the country. Rather those rulers destroyed the precious heritages of Hindus. Hindu kingdom Vijaynagar, which was one of the most glorious kingdoms of its time, was destroyed by the Muslims in 1565. Naipaul deplores the ruin of great cities like Vijaynagar, Tuglakbad, Tatta. According to Naipaul, the monuments built by the Muslim rulers reveal the exploitation of Indian resources. Muslim ruled over India almost six centuries but built no schools, no institutions and kept the people of this country devoid of enlightenment.

During his first visit to India, Naipaul finds decadence everywhere in the society. The land of his fantasy proves to be land of poverty, corruption and filth. Naipaul is disgusted to find corruption prevalent in all the institutions. He himself has experience of corruption and red-tapism in the Custom House, where his certain items are sealed but he is able to get them back with the help of an influential Indian. He is shocked to find bureaucracy involved in corruption. Even the bureaucrats do not feel themselves bound to obey the law. In Lucknow, Naipaul observes: "Traffic lights are part of the trappings of the modern city. Lucknow therefore has them; but they are only decorations, and dangerous, because ministers are required by their dignity never to halt at lights; and there are forty-six ministers in the state." (*An Area of Darkness*, 79) Naipaul also comes to know that in the different government departments in India, there are percentages

of profits. Even police takes bribery. Corruption has penetrated in the society so much that the officers who refuse to be involved in corruption, have to suffer its consequences. And they are transferred from their respective departments on various grounds. "Policeman, thief, politician, the role has become interchangeable." (*India: A Million Mutinies Now*, 4) Due to rampant corruption, people feel themselves trapped and are disappointed about their future prospects. As a teacher in Kashmir tells Naipaul: "Corruption and nepotism everywhere. [...]. Everybody wanting to go out to United Nation's jobs. Doctors going abroad, scientists going to America. The future is totally black." (*An Area of Darkness*, 94) During his second visit that took place during Emergency imposed upon the country by Indira Gandhi, he finds corruption in politics too.

According to Naipaul, the concepts of traditional Hinduism are not compatible with the modern era's demands as Hindu religion prompts passivity and non-materialism among its adherents. He also condemns the Hindu practice of retreat into the self that inhibits the development of perception and habit of observation that is necessary for the progress of the country. Naipaul says: "When men cannot observe, they don't have ideas only obsessions." (*India: A Wounded Civilization*, 119) By their adherence to concept of Karma, fatalism, retreat, Hindu society has not been able to face the challenges of postcolonial era. According to Naipaul, Hindus instead of solving their problems rationally, try to deal with their problems through abstractions and symbols. They try to find solution to every problem in spiritual terms and depend upon magic, mysticism and astrology for it.

According to Hindu religion the world is an illusion and they believe in the transitory nature of everything. Moreover, Hindu religion legitimates the suffering that is really the reason of suppression of the Hindus by the foreign rulers for centuries. And this attitude of Hindus is really the main reason of inhibiting their progress towards future. He even finds Indian nationalism greatly tied with Hinduism.

Hindu religion's basic flaw, according to Naipaul is the separation between spirituality and the worldly affairs. In Hindu religion spirituality is more important than worldly affairs. Hinduism also gives more importance to universal than the particular. Hindu religion completely negates the material world, leaving spirituality abstract and a vague concept. Naipaul endorses the viewpoint that Hinduism should integrate both these worlds to lead its nation becoming a modern India.

Naipaul fully agrees with Dr Sudhir Kakkar, a psychotherapist that Hindu's way of leading instinctive lives reveals that they have underdeveloped ego that is revealed in their manner of perception and their attitude to lead life without questioning anything. Indian failure to bring any change in the country is because their every aspect of life is still tied to the pre-ordained canons of fate and religion. The more reliance on the mystical and hidden than the obvious has developed into their limitation of vision.

Naipaul has lamented Indian's limitation of vision in "Defect of Vision" included in *India: A Wounded Civilization*. According to Naipaul, Indian's confinement to their own values have made them misfit in the world. Their rejection of the modern world values has created

breach between Indians and the modern world. As Kaker tells Naipaul about the fixity and rigidity of the Indian set up: “it is the Western style, mature personality, individualistic and assertive, that would be misfit” (*India: A Wounded Civilization*, 104) Naipaul asserts that if Indians continue to think in the ways mandated by their own orthodox culture and values, they will never be able to solve their problems. Even Indians are unable to comprehend the obvious facts. These people are unaware of the glory of their past. Naipaul comments that Indians are “unable to see their country directly” (*An Area of Darkness*, 201)

Naipaul is satirical of negative impact of Gandhism in Indian civilization. Mahatma Gandhi promoted non-Western passive values in the Indian society. Naipaul considers Gandhi responsible for pushing his nation again into the Dark Age. Gandhi proposed no solution for the social problems in the country and his ideologies provoked indifference to the social problems. He introduced the policy of non-violence among his people. Gandhi favoured the habit of retreating from reality into spirituality because according to him freedom lies in retreating from the world of reality. His ideology, his message, his vision has been a major cause of creating stasis and stagnation in the Indian society. While comparing Marx and Gandhi, Ejaz Ahmad analyses:

If Marx raved against the slow ('vegetative') pace of change in India, Gandhi admires precisely that kind of stasis, while his sense of India's eternal changelessness is much more radical than Marx could ever muster: that the Indian peasant has

used the same kind of plough for ‘thousand of years,’ while the education system has also remained the same is said to be a *good* thing.²¹

According to Naipaul, India’s crises had been due to Gandhi’s rejection of hybridity of Western civilization and Indian civilization. He says about Gandhi: “India undid him. He became a Mahatma. He was to be reverenced for what he was, his message was irrelevant... He remains a tragic paradox.”(*An Area of Darkness*, 81)

Passivity of the Indian civilization has urged Naipaul to term it as “a wounded civilization” that bears the marks of wounds by the foreign rulers. Lack of dynamism in the Hindu society provided a chance to the outsiders to impose their own values by oppressing and suppressing them. He remarks about Indian civilization: “No country was so easily raided and plundered and learned so little from its disasters.”(*India: A Wounded Civilization*, 7). Whenever invaders came in the country, Hindu retreated from action. Instead of combating the invaders, they provided them full chance to exploit them. While commenting upon India’s history, he says that India’s history is the history of different invaders that made Indian civilization static. He especially mentions the passivity of Hindus during the Mughal rule in which according to Naipaul, Hindus did not resist the destruction of their Brahmin cities by the Muslims.

In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul has again and again mentioned the intellectual failure of the Indians. The intellectual failure of Indians has been revealed in their inability to stable the socio-economic system of the country. Again he differentiates between

Orient and Occident, that of intellect. Indians lack intellectual quality to bring stability in the country. This deficiency of intellect is manifested in the non-rationality of Indians. This is the basic difference between the Western world and the Indians. Indians lack creativity to make use of the latest technology.

The sectarian and religious violence in the postcolonial India revealed the selfishness of the politicians to gain their purpose through violence. The leaders appeal to fanaticism created problems in the country. Naipaul praises Nehru, who really appeared to be a reasonable man because he never appealed to fanaticism. In the pre-Emergency periods, the riots and strikes by the students and the general masses revealed the oppression in the people that forced them to bring revolution in the country by overthrowing Indira Gandhi's government. By use of violence, these leaders destroyed the possibility of bringing stability to the country. Naipaul appreciates Shiv Sena, the Hindu political leader, for showing his concern for the poor people of the country.

Naipaul stresses the need for ideological transformation in the concept of nationalism. In the colonial era, nationalism was used as a power of resistance against colonialism. Naipaul rejects R.K. Narayan's stance that there is an eternal India that will go on despite all type of modernization. He comments: "To get down to Narayan's world, to perceive the order and continuity he saw in the dereliction and smallness of India... was to ignore too much of what could be seen...." (*India: A Wounded Civilization*, 21) According to Naipaul's view, these outdated concepts of nationalism can only lead postcolonial societies downward. Eastern nationalism

is not autonomous and creative like European nationalism, so it can sustain only if it assimilates other cultures. In this way, these nations can become modern nations. Gandhi promoted wrong concept of nationalism by the rejection of everything Western. Here Naipaul seems to be presenting a viewpoint, quite different from Fanon, who has emphasized the need of national consciousness in the postcolonial societies to sustain their identity in the age of globalization. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon expresses his views on the necessity of national consciousness: "National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension."²² Fanon's viewpoint seems quite contrary to Naipaul's viewpoint as he maintains that only by retaining national culture; can combat the Western effort to categorize all cultures into the category of universal by negating all the diversities in the cultures of the postcolonial nations.

British colonialism has developed in the people the feelings of inferiority about their culture that results in scorn for their own culture and values. Feelings of contempt that colonials had for the natives, Indian people mimic by having feeling of contempt for their own culture and values. Naipaul observes that the elite class has feeling of contempt for the people belonging to the lower rank, treating them as 'other.'

Hypocrisy and vanity are the attitudes that Naipaul finds in the underdeveloped nation of India. People have a craze for social status that prompts them to behave hypocritically. In Indian society, Naipaul observes that people have mania for the foreign products and they feel pride in converting their Indian names into English names.

In *The Overcrowded Barracoon*, Naipaul has described the attitude of such people:

For among certain class of Indian usually more prosperous than the fellows, there is a passionate urge to explain to the visitors that they must not be considered part of poor dirty India, that their values and standards are higher and they live perpetually outraged by the country which gives them their livelihood. For them the second rate foreign product, either people or manufactures, is preferable to the Indian. They suggest for them as much as for the European 'technician', India is a country to be temporarily exploited.²³

According to Naipaul, people's attitude to defy their duties and responsibilities has been the main reason of the underdevelopment of the country. India does not appear to be a self-sufficient society. There is a great dependence upon others. Most of the people that Naipaul encounters have no sense of dignity of labour or sense of responsibility. In offices, he finds people defying their official duties. Even the sweepers, whose duty is to clean the hotel, only consider it their duty to be physically present at the place of their duty. Because according to them, their presence is enough and they are not supposed to clean the place. Inefficiency and laziness are the common attitude of the people that is the main reason of economic underdevelopment of the country. People have a tendency to be considered bourgeoisie of the country while according to Fanon no true bourgeoisie exists in an underdeveloped country. Work is considered degradation in this poverty stricken society. Naipaul observes that if a person is asked to do other than their assigned duty, he

will never do it. He gives the example: "And the person, who makes dingy bed in the hotel room, will be affronted if he is asked to sweep the dirty floor. The clerk will not bring you a glass of water if you faint." (*An Area of Darkness*, 47) Naipaul also criticizes Gita, the sacred book of Hindu's for prompting its people to abstain from other's service: "And do thy duty, if it be humble, rather than another if it be great. To die in one's duty is life: to live in another's is death." (*An Area of Darkness*, 47)

During his visits to India, Naipaul finds India the poorest Third World country, facing the threats of hunger, overpopulation, unemployment etc. The independent state claimed that it was committed to eradicate poverty in the country, but its policies resulted in intensification of it. Even decades after independence, India still has not been able to overcome its major problems, although its leaders have been talking of bringing socialism in the country and showing their concern for the improvement of the condition of the common man. But these remained slogans only. These leaders failed to lead their country into the modern age. Independence has not brought any industrial revolution in the country that was promised by the leaders at the time of independence. Even Indira Gandhi's government that came into power with the slogan to shake off poverty could not do so. Naipaul is stunned to know the dilapidated condition of certain Indian villages, when Dipanjan tells him:

...before harvest time-they had a little wheat, but so little they could not make chapattis. They made paste of flour and served it in very small quantities. Children could not digest that paste.

Hunger-getting one full meal a day –that was the major determining factor of the quality of village life for five months of the year at that time.

(India: A Million Mutinies Now, 316)

The presences of markets for prostitution in India reveal the utter destitution of the economic state of the country. In Lucknow, Naipaul visits such markets where poverty stricken women are found to be waiting for customers. Naipaul mentions the portrayal of poverty in Indian literature in which the pretty girls have to adopt prostitution as a profession to pay the family medical bills. But Naipaul is most irritated with the irrational attitude of the people towards poverty. “I found that for most Indians, Indian poverty was still a poetic concept, a prompting to piety and sweet melancholy, part of country uniqueness, its Gandhian non-materialism”. (*India: A Million Mutinies Now*, 8) In spite of being the poorest country, he finds lack of urge in the people to shake off this poverty. In fact for the development of a country, more than economic and political development, the development in people’s attitudes is more important. Hindu religion encourages its people to tolerate the intolerable conditions with passivity. Again this is a part of Indian faith that urges them to suffer so many things without questioning.

Naipaul deplores the condition of the poor people in India who have to live amid filth and stench. There he observes piles of filth everywhere. Naipaul says: “I had seen the starved child defecating at the road-side while the mangy dog wanted to eat the excrement.” (*An Area of Darkness*, 45) Naipaul is disgusted to find people

defecating everywhere. He finds them defecating beside the railway tracks, beside the roads and even the tourist's spots are not exempted. This filth along with depicting the failure of the government policies to provide basic needs to its people, where more than half of the population is still below the poverty line, also depicts lack of sensibility in the people, who do not seem to take notice of excrement around them. Naipaul observes: "It was unclean to clean; it was unclean even to notice. It was the business of the sweepers to remove excrement, and until the sweepers came, people were content to live in the midst of their own excrement."(*India: A Wounded Civilization*, 68)

The hierarchy of cast system in India has been considered by Naipaul, the main reason of disintegration among the people. Unlike racialism that Naipaul found in Africa and the Caribbean, he finds division of cast here. He has been able only to consider it a type of racial category. The cast division, according to Naipaul seems quite contradictory to the spiritual aspect of Hindu religion. The whole society seems to be divided into casts and clans. This division between high casts and low casts has created sense of injustice among the people. These cast considerations have destroyed people's self- esteem, who belong to the lower hierarchy. The different prejudices that are related with class, clan, religion, language and regionalism have abolished sense of communal feelings among the people. Naipaul finds that there is no relation between man and man but the whole country is bound by the narrow loyalties based on cast, clan, language or religion. There is no individual sense but every person has been described as a member of certain cast, class or

group. Even religion has lost its meaning in this society. Instead of being regarded as a link with spirituality, it is considered as a source of identity. Moreover, there are clashes due to regionalism. For example the Hindus belonging to the south of India have clashes with the Hindus belonging to the north east. These prejudices have been the main reason of clashes among the people of India. Since independence, these clashes have really been the reason of hampering the future progress of India. While in the letter that Naipaul wrote to his father from India and that is included in *Between Father and Son*, he expresses his views about the racial prejudices of the country: "Do not imagine that I am staying in this country. This country is hot with racial prejudices and I certainly don't want to stay here."²⁴

Naipaul is really dismayed to find the derogatory position of Untouchables in the Indian society, who in spite of being a part of Indian society, have not been able to gain any status in the society. The wretched condition of the Untouchables presents the image of India as a dehumanized society. Although Mahatma Gandhi wanted to rescue Untouchables from the humiliated position in the society but his efforts could not bring any change in the attitude of the people. In the Indian society, Untouchables had always a role of slave to the upper class people. Naipaul had chance of meeting an Untouchable, who struggled hard to get respectable status in the society.

The gap between India and the Western world is not only the economic gap but there is also a wide gap in the sensibility of the people. According to Naipaul, while the Western people are dynamic and keep on enhancing

their sensibility according to the demands of the era, as for as Indians are concerned, they more than their own sensibility, have their blind faiths, myths and rituals to follow. These people are bound by their orthodox beliefs, customs and traditions. Their adherence to traditions and customs provides them ongoing system of life. When Naipaul visits Lucknow, the capital state of Uttar Pradesh, he is surprised to find the Muslims following their blind faith without taking into consideration the demands of the modern era. He finds these people sending their children to the Quranic schools to get education because according to their faith, pure and untainted education can only be provided by these Quranic schools. Like most of the people of India, these Muslims have confined lives due to their blind faith. These people feel themselves secure and protected in these faiths and outside their faiths everything is corrupt. According to Naipaul's view this is the reason of Indian society being a static and decaying one because it is still dictated by the blind faiths, rituals and myths.

These people of India, who love to live in their make believe worlds, have no real sense of history. In Naipaul's view, the idea of history is only related with the complex or Western societies, while the simple or half made societies have no idea of their past. In *Enigma of Arrival*, Naipaul, has defined the need of history in human life because it gives them the idea of their identity. Naipaul mocks Indians' sense of history, when he reads an inscription in a temple in Vijay Nagar that there was rain of gold, when Raja prayed for it. He also mocks the history regarding the Vedic period. It has been told that in Vedic era, the Indians had the knowledge of the air craft,

telephone, the atom bomb, surgery etc. He can't believe that India was at the breakthrough of industrial revolution before the arrival British. He is surprised by the simplemindedness of the Indian scientists, who want to improve transportation by improving the yoking of bullocks. Because of not assessing their history realistically, India has to face such crises as war with Pakistan, Chinese attack, the Emergency Era etc. He wishes that Indian should come to term with their history and move towards the glorious future by learning lesson from it because there can be no perspective for future, without regarding the past history in realistic way.

During his third visit, Naipaul finds transformations taking place in the country. Fauzia Mustafa asserts: "the optimism of Naipaul's final prognosis for India is a somewhat welcome contrast to the sense of depletion and frustration that characterized both *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*). In his previous two books about India, Naipaul has condemned the aggressive feelings among Indians relating to their cast, religion and language but in his third book, he considers these aggressive feelings, revealing creativity among the people. These people have been using their fanaticism for the transformation of India by channelising their energy. In his previous books, Naipaul has revealed his derision for excesses that might be racial, religious or relating to cast, but in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, he considers these excesses as revelation of zeal and energy among the people. These excesses are also indicative of intellectual growth in India. He regards these accesses initiating the process of restoration and regeneration in India. Even Naipaul has gone too far that he reacted to

demolition of Babri Masque in 2001 by saying that demolition of historical masque revealed creative passion among Hindus.

The most optimistic thing that Naipaul discerns during his third visit that now even the people belonging to the lower strata of the society seem to be aware of the need for self-assertion. The intellectual awareness in the people is manifested in the groups in Bombay, who have gathered to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Ambedkar's. People's awareness to pay homage to their leaders, indicates that this nation has become aware of its obligations. Moreover, Naipaul finds different groups deriving their inspiration from different sources. Some people derive inspiration from worship of deity, others from their orthodox Hindu faith etc. People have become more analytical. Now the people's adherence to the orthodox way of life is giving way to new ways of perception.

Now people have become aware of the need to integrate both spiritual and real world. Now people do not consider the world of spirit and world of matter as separate entities. Amir who has been educated in the West, has got the realization to integrate both world of religion and the real world, as he says:

I find solace in both ways of thinking. The historical way shows me that is above this – our sufferings, our little problems. The idea of human destiny shows me that we are really moving towards a better world, in spite of the troubles and conflagration. The religious way teaches me endurance, reconciliation with the divine plan of

which this is a part, but with hope and belief in the better future. (*India: A Million Mutinies Now*, 381)

According to Naipaul, Indian people's realization to accommodate themselves to the demands of the new era has been leading them towards a progressive future. Now people instead of confining themselves to their orthodox beliefs, rituals and myths seem to be willing to become part of the global culture. Naipaul favours the adoption of the global culture for the Third World countries because according to him, only this can lead these nations towards glorious future. All the socio-economic and intellectual development that Naipaul now finds in India, he regards an effort by the Indians to adjust themselves to the global culture. So Naipaul's journey to India that started in "an area of darkness," ends in an area of light, where restorative powers have been working for the regeneration of the country.

Thus these travelogues do not reveal Naipaul's sentimental response to his ancestral homeland but he is very much critical of the Indian society. He has realistically pointed out ills in Indian society that have really been reason of its decline. While evaluating the Mughal era in India, he does not seem to acknowledge Muslim's contribution to progress of this country. In his third travel book, where he has appreciated the development in Indian society, he has also appreciated Indian mutinies leading towards progressive future. He has also regarded these mutinies as strengthening the country. But facts and figures have proved that this violence in Indian society has led to great upheaval in. These mutinies have resulted in a conflict with the government and with the neighboring

territories. In contemporary era, different ethnic groups in India seem to be at war with each other. This Hindu fundamentalism has led to wars between India and Pakistan, as India has always wanted leadership of Asia. Naipaul has appreciated extremism and fundamentalism among Hindus calling it revolutionary zeal among them.

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POLITICS OF PRAGMATISM: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to define, explain and analyses what politics of pragmatism is. It is an effort to develop pragmatism as a conceptual framework to study politics practiced by politicians that claim to be pragmatic. In developing this framework, it looks into examples from the US, Britain and India. Inside Pakistan, it takes a quick look at the politics of the post-Z A Bhutto PPP leaders from the perspective of pragmatism.

KEY WORDS

Pragmatism, Idealism, Politics, British, Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto.

This paper attempts to define and understand the term 'pragmatism' as an approach in politics and not as the philosophical movement which was pioneered by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce in the United States in the 1870s and subsequently developed by William James, John Dewy, George Herbert Mead, Clarence Irving Lewis and others.¹ Historically, pragmatism is rooted in the Greek word 'pragma' which means "thing, fact, matter or affair".²

As stated above pragmatism is an approach in politics which is understood, interpreted and practised by different politicians in a variety of ways. The following are some of the salient features of political pragmatism.

Firstly, politics means those policies and actions that politicians undertake to attain power in order to influence the public life of a society or a country and pragmatism implies the adoption of a “practical approach to problems and affairs”.³ By practical, we mean that idea, method or action which is workable or is likely to be successful. So, when politicians show “a kind of willingness to whatever works to reach the desired goal,” it is called politics of pragmatism.⁴

Secondly, pragmatic politicians are generally realist⁵ i.e. they accept the situation as it really is and do not pretend it to be different. That is why not only such politicians are flexible but they also exhibit the freedom to revise their political course whenever and wherever necessary to achieve their objectives.⁶ This realism can be embarrassing and painful because it often requires change and compromise in one’s stated political stance.⁷ So, why does a pragmatic politician choose such an arduous path? It is because he thinks that “politics is about the art of compromise. It is about finding ways forward that competing forces can agree on. It involves deal making to find the best possible accommodation of everyone’s interest”.⁸

Thirdly, pragmatic politics is indifferent to preconceived political divides of ‘conservatism’, ‘liberalism’, ‘left’ or ‘right’ and is primarily driven by the desire of “good consequences”.⁹ What is ‘good’ is determined by the pragmatic politician and once it is determined then he is not afraid to assume any position to secure that goal. This point

can be understood by quoting an example from the life of the US statesman Abraham Lincoln, who is well known for his pragmatism. Lincoln ended the institution of slavery but he was equally committed to save the American Union. In August 1862 while explaining his position on these issues to a newspaper editor Horace Greeley, he wrote, "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that".¹⁰

Fourthly, pragmatists reject the notion that people have a definite nature or ideas can be absolute. In a way, their approach in politics is Darwinian in the sense that human nature is evolutionary as it keeps on changing over time. Similarly, they believe in the Hegelian philosophy which tells that human ideas, institutions and practices remain in a state of flux. So, what may be 'good' or 'true' at the most fundamental level of political principles could vary at different places and epochs. Another example may illustrate this point. The American philosopher John Dewy commended the political ideas of Thomas Jefferson-one of the Founding Fathers of America-as good and progressive in 1776 but argued that the same ideas if applied centuries later could obstruct further progress.¹¹ Put in another way, one can say that what is 'good' or 'true' at one particular time or place may not be true for another because the reality as well as the human knowledge of that very reality keeps evolving;¹² thus, even truths can be fallible and subject to revision.¹³

Fifthly, pragmatism is the opposite of dogmatism and idealism. While the idealist trusts a theory, the pragmatist relies on evidence. While the dogmatist upholds an overarching narrative and searches for what fits over his

pre-conceptions, the pragmatist looks at the specifics of the situation and prefers to test his ideas and changes direction if necessary.¹⁴ For an idealist, principle is everything whereas a pragmatist discards every principle and adapts to the circumstances to lay hand on political power. An example of political pragmatism can be quoted from India where the politicians of the 'left' and the 'right' set aside their ideological differences to overthrow the first UPA government in 2009.¹⁵ Unlike an idealist who applies doctrinal or preconceived remedies to the emerging political complexities, a pragmatist treats the 'issues and problems purely on their merits'¹⁶ and embraces that particular idea which produces 'good results' because he has no faith in any ideological purity.¹⁷ We can say that pragmatism is "a rejection of the knowability of foreordained truths in favour of 'variability, initiative, departure from routine and experimentation'".¹⁸ A pertinent example can be the 2008 election campaign rhetoric of the US President Obama in which he emphasized that his political actions would be based on what is possible rather than what is harmonious with some ideal truth.¹⁹

What Obama said actually lies at the heart of pragmatism. For pragmatists, there is no ideal political truth; in fact, all political truths are relative because these (truths) are dependent upon the usefulness of the political ideas to the people and this usefulness also changes with the changing circumstances.²⁰ While the idealists religiously stick to fixed principles, the pragmatists' chief concern is to get the desired results and in the process they adapt themselves to the changing situation and do not abstain from anything to achieve their ends.²¹ To them, the ends justify the means. While the idealists hanker after some "unknown objective reality" or "permanent truth;" for

pragmatists the political truth is “that works” because it can be tested by its consequences.²² Put in another way, the political truth of the pragmatists is in agreement with the ‘living reality’ because not only this political truth can be validated; it also works and satisfies people.²³ The inclination of the pragmatist is towards what is concrete and visible through practical consequences rather than something that merely exists in the domain of the abstract.

Another aspect of pragmatism related to “what works” is “what counts.” Everything is up for grabs as long as it contributes to the end result. One reason why pragmatists exhibit this tendency is because they think that people judge politicians not on the basis of what they believe in but what they actually deliver.²⁴ An apt illustration in this regard can be the Sichuan proverb quoted by the communist Chinese President Deng Xiaoping: “No matter if it is a white cat or a black cat; as long as it can catch mice, it is a good cat.”²⁵ A somewhat similar thought was expressed by the British Labour Party leader, Tony Blair on his election in 1997 when he said that what counts is not an “outdated ideology” (an obvious jibe at the conservative and the liberal parties) but “what works.”²⁶ To make things work, the pragmatists often have to show a great degree of flexibility against ideological rigidity for which they are accused of “unprincipled pragmatism.” When a US Senator Everett Dirksen was charged of “unprincipled pragmatism,” he defended by arguing that he was not unprincipled but just flexible.²⁷ Somewhat similar charges were leveled and defended with regard to the politics of the late French President Charles de Gaulle.

In the case of our country, Pakistan, one can identify several aspects of pragmatism in the politics of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in the post - Z.A Bhutto period under

the leadership of Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari. Like any other political party, the ultimate objective of the PPP after the overthrow and subsequent hanging of its chairman Z.A Bhutto by President General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq was to gain political power. The party tried to destabilize the Zia government on its own through agitation, however, it realized it could not. When the party's top leader Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan from the US in 1986, it avowedly adopted a pragmatic stance i.e. the politics of agitation was considered harmful to the country because it could lead to another martial law. This did not mean that the party did not build pressure against Zia; in fact, it went to a higher level by becoming a part of a protest movement such as the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) in 1981 but not to the extent where another military intervention could become a possibility. Even becoming a constituent party of the MRD was in itself a pragmatic move because some of the parties in it were the ones that had played an active role in the protest movement launched by the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), the opposition alliance that overthrew the Z A Bhutto-led PPP government back in 1977. Despite this, the PPP decided to join the MRD alliance to dislodge Zia from power.

The PPP adopted a much more pragmatic approach against the government of President General Pervez Musharraf. Although the party did remain an active member of the political alliances against Musharraf such as the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) and the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD); it refrained from launching any agitation. On the contrary, it adopted several pragmatic postures towards the government. Initially, it declared its willingness to cooperate with the military

regime.²⁸ Later on, it increased the pressure on his government by demanding the dissolution of the legislative assemblies.²⁹ When that did not work, the party showed its readiness to contest general elections under the same president.³⁰ Moreover, at one point in time, the party rejected the possibility of cutting any deal with the military ruler but subsequently not only did it hammer out an accord in the form of the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO); it also refused to impeach President Musharraf, when the party came back in power in 2008.³¹

The PPP followed quite a different strategy as an opposition party against the civilian governments of Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif in the 1990s. Overall, its politics boiled down to the ouster of Nawaz Sharif's government even if it had to resort to the politics of agitation,³² hence the long marches and the train marches. However, it adopted a pragmatic approach towards the Pakistan Muslim League (PML Nawaz League) in the post-Musharraf period, courtesy the "Charter of Democracy" signed by the two parties.³³

Pragmatists do not bind themselves in any idealism because by being political realists they believe in "what works" in a given situation. That is why the PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari is on the record to have said that accords are not the Holy Quran or hadith³⁴ in spite of having signed the power-sharing formula with Nawaz Sharif under the Murree Declaration some time back.³⁵ The PPP did trim its stances here and there and practised pragmatic politics during its last tenure in the central government (2008-13) to the extent that while it had unsuccessfully tried to dislodge the provincial government of the PML in the Punjab in 1989; it made no such serious effort against the PML Punjab provincial government while the PPP ruled the Centre in its

last tenure despite the fact that it had serious reservations over the power-sharing arrangements in the Punjab province with its senior coalition partner, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N).³⁶

Somewhat similar pragmatism was visible in the PPP's stances with regard to economy and industry. Just before the 1988 elections, the PPP promised that there would be no nationalization of industry if it came into power³⁷ yet once it was sacked from power, its Chairperson Benazir Bhutto declared that her party would nationalize industries³⁸ and banks.³⁹ In other words, the party did adopt contradictory positions as and when these suited its political strategy. An inherent conflict could also be discerned in the competing claims of those who felt that the party stood for the have-nots and those who thought that the haves could also lay claim on it. When the party was out of power, its businessman secretary general Ahmad Mukhtar stated that the PPP would bring forward the capitalists and industrialists⁴⁰ whereas the party's Punjab President Qasim Zia claimed that the PPP was a representative of the working class⁴¹ and the president of its Cultural Wing Fakhar Zaman stressed upon the central leadership "to purge the PPP's Central Executive Committee of the capitalists and feudals."⁴²

To make things work towards certain political ends is a difficult task but pragmatists take up this challenge. In the process, they adapt to difficult situations and when the going gets tough they take chances by seizing upon the available opportunities; neither do they shirk from compromises or experimentation nor are they afraid to offer out of the box solutions in the blind alleys or dead ends of politics.

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THE REPRESENTATION OF MARITAL LOVE IN VIRGINIA
WOOLF'S *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the meaning of being married. It explores the creative possibilities of love and understanding in marriage. In Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe's philosophical introspection focuses on the struggles of the already married couple – Mr and Mrs Ramsay – to 'rethink and rework' their relationship. Lily in her characteristically modern way recreates experience from the perspective of both Mr and Mrs Ramsay. In spite of her exceptional beauty, Mrs Ramsay is offered limited possibilities of existence; therefore, she recedes to her private world of reflections which she regrettfully could not share with her husband. It is argued that the struggle of the sexes in this novel represents a challenge to the hegemonic male-defined culture. The new outlook of seeing man and woman from the point of view of human potential also deconstructs the notion that quest for values and truth is specifically a male sphere. Mr Ramsay is represented in the process of realizing the superficiality and absurdity of the traditional emotional and thinking patterns about Mrs Ramsay. At the end of the novel, Lily chooses not to marry and decides to stay with the highest

mode of sublimation – love and art. This research paper investigates the following questions. Is marriage, after all, a destructive relationship for a genius even if pursued seriously? Is marriage an alliance of intellect and emotion or repetition of a series of fulfilling copulation? Is formal complexity of the novel a corollary of the complexity of personal human relationships?

KEY WORDS: Love, Marriage, Gender, Art, Genius

It is necessary for the growth of human relationships to have sincere, honest and frank communication, only possible if man and woman learn to liberate themselves from the stranglehold of the stereotypical male and female patterns. The heroine in Victorian fiction is usually subsumed by a potential lover who offers her some promise of limited freedom, and the episode is usually rounded off with a happy marriage. The Twentieth-century representation of women in fiction delineates them as individuals who could exercise control and power over themselves and their lives, and above all, to live through their explored ideals as a pragmatic possibility of existence: “changing circumstances made it easier for modern women to come to understand and question their limited possibilities.”¹ The idea of a New Woman in the 1890s, the germination of the new outlook to realize women’s participation in the evolutionary process of change, progress and culture, offered women a sense of release from the bondage within their psychic walls. The new interpretations of the human psyche offered by various psychoanalytical schools contributed significantly to seeing man and woman from the point of view of human potential.

The battle of the sexes in the modern novels represents a challenge to the hegemonic male-defined culture. This is exemplified by woman's repudiation of old roles and customs such as being defined as a 'mere woman' confined strictly to her biological functions and exclusive domestic responsibilities. This new outlook also deconstructs the notion that quest for values and truth is specifically a male sphere. On the contrary, woman appears as a kind of 'female Faust'. Man, on the other hand, is represented in the process of realizing the superficiality and absurdity of the traditional emotional and thinking patterns about woman. It engenders hypersensitivity and mutuality to seek self-authenticity. In the very glow, warmth and sunshine of a man-woman relationship, each matches the other according to the strength of their beings: "Love need not necessarily unite us, or keep us apart, but it always reveals the difference between us."² Thus the experience of love is the key to unlock the doors of each unique individual, thus fostering humanity's striving towards self-revelation and autonomy.

In Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, love is represented in an incredibly complex manner because there is apparently little dialogue, almost no plot and action. It is narrated in a 'stream-of-consciousness' mode through Lily Briscoe's thoughts and observations. Lily in her characteristically modern way recreates experience from the perspective of both Mr and Mrs Ramsay. Woolf attempts to translate the mystery of love-relationship into rational terms of understanding through her 'stream-of-consciousness' mode of narration: "Woolf's attempts at the depiction of multiple, possibly collective, subjective consciousness, implicitly mark her out as pushing 'stream-of-consciousness' in new directions, to the point where the term may not be

adequate in accounting for her method.”³ Goldman sums up his observation on the Reviews to *the Lighthouse* that the reviewers predominantly tend to appreciate this “new lyric novel for its innovations in form, experimentalism with character and apparent abandonment of plot.”⁴ Vogler, too, sees the form of the novel as “purely arbitrary and abstract, like that of painting.”⁵ Woolf renders the marvellous depiction of things in simultaneity. For example, Mrs Ramsay, in the midst of self-reflection, is simultaneously reading aloud “The Fisherman and His Wife” to her favourite son, James. Everything that could possibly happen to characters within a single day has been rendered in accordance with the flux of things. Inwardness is made the very fact of everyday life: “For Woolf, as for Freud, unconscious drives and desires constantly exert pressure on our conscious thoughts and actions. For psychoanalysis the human subject is a complex entity, of which the conscious mind is only a small part.”⁶ Woolf’s technique makes the reader “search among the infinite series of impressions which time had laid down, leaf upon leaf, fold upon fold softly, incessantly upon his brain.”⁷ This technique is further complicated by the modern notion of time.

The nature of the concept of time as an objective, straightforwardly real, constantly flowing clock time as a befitting medium of regulating human affairs has been challenged and questioned here. It is argued that the concept of a “subjective, psychological, non-spatial, time” lays bare the disjuncture between the inner emotional and mental states and the outer sequential time in a character.⁸ The surface substantiality of everyday life is translated into metaphoric representation of the passing emotional and mental states which gather around a hazy centre holding the master-key, and all that happens to a character is

pinned around deconstructing its interlocking logic. It is argued that love is the hazy centre. In the absence of an external moral order which would traditionally bind characters around an established set of values, love assumes the status of a cohesive moral force that offers a possibility of self-wholeness in the midst of unmanageable flux of life: "this novel attempts to communicate an almost inexpressible fluid impulse behind all human experience."⁹

In *To the Lighthouse*, an ageing couple, Mr and Mrs Ramsay, attempts to figure out the ups and downs of their "dignified and contemplative marital love."¹⁰ It seems an assessment of love long past its point of inception to "rethink and rework" their relationship.¹¹ Lily's philosophical introspection focuses on the struggles of the already married couple to 'rethink and rework' their relationship. She questions how far deep can we penetrate into the other, and can the 'moment of intimacy' still be authentic in terms of the knowledge of the other: "Who knows what we are, what we feel? Who knows even at the moment of intimacy, This is knowledge?"¹² Mrs Ramsay conceives of love not inseparable from the concomitant sinister perils of existence: "what could be more serious than the love of man for woman, what more commanding, more impressive, bearing in its bosom the seeds of death."¹³ Lily, too, sees its paradoxical nature that "there is nothing more tedious, puerile, and inhuman than love; yet it is also beautiful and necessary."¹⁴

It is argued that the idea of love is not remote from "an ironical or wistful questioning of life and reality."¹⁵ Does life hold in its wake a timeless moment of consummation through love which may continue to be inexhaustible all life? What passes between Mr and Mrs Ramsay seems to spring from the hinterland of their fine minds. It seems

evident at the start of the novel that something is definitely amiss in their relationship: "Someone had blundered."¹⁶ Why, in spite of their good intentions, do they miss out the magnetic feeling of fullness? Is it because of Mr Ramsay's immersion into himself that averts any magnetic contact with his wife who is ever ready to embrace her husband's love with warm intimacy? Is it his great mind distancing her from him? Is he afraid of admitting to his wife his sagging vitality? It seems evident that Mr Ramsay is emotionally cold. He seems to be frozen at a certain point of his life. His Faustian ambition to create a 'monumental piece of eternity' in the realm of philosophy occupies him so much that he almost loses contact with surrounding reality. His sepulchral immersion into himself could hardly give him an idea of his being alive; he has to make an effort of the will to know that he is living: "he now perceives by some pricking in his toes that he lives."¹⁷ As Mrs Ramsay perceives, "He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life."¹⁸ His "fiery unworldliness" marks him out from the 'here and now' of things.¹⁹ He is incapable of seeing over-trivial little things of existence but is ever alive to "the extraordinary things, with an eye like the eagle's."²⁰ She gives the allowance due to a fine mind such as his that "a great mind like his must be different in every way from ours."²¹ His intellectual pride, his reputation as the greatest metaphysician of the time, the satisfaction at accomplishing what he has already accomplished are not sufficient to hold back his persistent sense of failure. Nevertheless, he pretends to walk on the tight rope of existence with a sunny disposition: "he was for the most part happy."²² He can say "the most melancholy things" with a disposition "more cheerful than usual."²³

What is the good of wearing this kind of disposition when he is afraid to "own his own feelings, who could not say, This is what I like – this is what I am."²⁴ William Bankes and Lily wonder why it is necessary to conceal feelings: "why so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life."²⁵ Mr Ramsay, on the other hand, sees himself in relation to the cosmic forces of life; he wants to immortalize himself and yet knows at the same time that he cannot because the sea of eternity engulfs every one: "how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on."²⁶ His wish to last till eternity becomes frustrated. In terms of his intelligence, he is stuck on the letter Q; there's nothing that he could do to move ahead: "he would die standing. He would never reach R."²⁷ In the deep recesses of his being, he conceived of himself as a genius but it turned out that he was not: "Is he to be blamed then if he is not that one?"²⁸ He realises that he is among "the steady goers of superhuman strength" who could gallop along the twenty-six letters from the first to the last but he is not "the gifted, the inspired who, miraculously, lump all the letters together in one flash – the way of genius."²⁹ He envisages that he falls short of perfection but he is not ready to give up. Why should he take upon himself the burden of guilt for which he cannot be held responsible?

Mr Ramsay fails to perceive that he lacks emotional assurance in spite of everything. He is, we are told, a very moody character; he is usually beset with uneasy and restless uncertainty that has brought severity and coldness in his manners towards others: "He was irritable – he was touchy."³⁰ There is an implicit desire to be caressed like an emotionally dependent child in his untiring and ceaseless demand for sympathy from Mrs Ramsay: "It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then

to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile.”³¹ Goldman sees in Mr Ramsay the latent desire to re-live the mother-child relationship: “Mr Ramsay’s relation to his wife suggests the man’s wish to return to the position of the child in relation to a woman like his mother.”³² Lee, too, makes a similar observation, “The woman’s emotional act of giving sympathy paradoxically fertilizes the man, but more in the manner of a mother feeding her child than a lover.”³³ He offers stubborn resistance to her ceaseless efforts to bring him back to life. Is it not sufficient for him to pay singular tribute to “the beauty of the world?”³⁴ We are told in the text that he requires sacrifices from others. Mrs Ramsay is never short of the desirable, supplying him with the warm glow of her feelings: “So boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent.”³⁵ On the contrary, her warm feelings extinguish the fire in his loins. He has started taking it as a comfortable couch where his passions would sleep in the lull of her warm embrace: “she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions.”³⁶ It gives Mr Ramsay an emotional assurance that he continues to persist in his cold demeanour towards her. The thwarted genius continues to freeze in the enchanting embrace of his wife. He does not realise till the end of the novel that he could not achieve through his genius what Mrs Ramsay achieves through love, ‘the perfect moments of being’.

There is this inexhaustible ability in Mrs Ramsay to withstand the disintegrating forces of life. She achieves from time to time ‘the perfect moments of being’ in the face of the evanescent and arbitrary impressions in her consciousness: “Of such moments, she thought, the thing is

made that remains for ever after.”³⁷ She understands intuitively the nature of her relationship with Mr Ramsay; she thinks that they “give to each other that solace which two different notes, one high, one low, struck together, seem to give each other as they combine.”³⁸ She admires him to the utmost: “There was nobody whom she reverenced as she reverenced him.”³⁹ She offers herself to him on the altar of life because he is far more important for the world than she: “what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible.”⁴⁰ She conceals her domestic worries from him so as not to upset him, taking upon herself the entire burden of domesticity.

In the midst of her domestic worries, it flashes across her consciousness that personal human relationships are inadequate, and even a perfect one is not flawless and could not stand the test of time: “it was at this moment when she was fretted thus ignobly in her exaltation.”⁴¹ It is evident in the text that both Mr and Mrs Ramsay mean well for each other but for Mr Ramsay his wife is not the only means of fulfilment. He subjects the emotion of love to his genius. He is suspended between them – Mrs Ramsay and genius –, unable to mark his singular preference. In his heart of hearts, he is guilty of starving her for the want of the magnetic feeling of fullness. She usually retreats to her private self which, in its many-sidedness and multiplicity, assumes “a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others.”⁴² In the end, he eats her away, steals her energy, and lives like an emotional parasite. Later in the novel, Lily blames him for draining emotional and spiritual warmth out of Mrs Ramsay: “That man...never gave; that man took.”⁴³ Consequently, Mrs Ramsay is forced to recede to her private world of reflections which she regretfully could not share with her husband. His “insatiable hunger for

sympathy" squeezes her dry.⁴⁴ His intellect squeezes him dry, too, like the autumn leaves, and that saps up his vitality. Toward the end of the novel, he feels himself like a spent force, like a smoked pipe. Deep down in his being, he continues to crave for emotional well-being and spiritual strength.

Mrs Ramsay derives the strength of her being from tender emotional realities of her heart which are informed by her spontaneous impulses. She is very hospitable, and always kind to guests. She is dignified and altruistic in her ingrained sympathy for the bereaved: "she wished so instinctively to help, to give."⁴⁵ Her humanistic view of life takes into account the most immediate existential problems: "There were the eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor."⁴⁶ She is, we are told, "trustful, childlike, reverential."⁴⁷ She is admired for her characteristic beauty which is intertwined with her spontaneous moral good: "She had been admired. She had been loved."⁴⁸ Her sensibility is acutely sensitive to all kinds of murmuring sounds around her; that is how she finds the vibrant rhythm of life away from men's learned chatter; her life is quite apart from men's intellectual pursuits. She is so charismatic that she can instantaneously make people lapse out: "after all, she had not generally any difficulty in making people like her."⁴⁹ Mr Tansley, the atheist, in spite of his priggish shell of morbid intellectuality, could not resist the charisma of her beauty which seems to shine above his intellectual pursuits. Mr Tansley, during his walk with her, appreciates her beauty but fails to express his admiration for it. Her personality reminds him of something buried beneath his intellectual certainties. He is made to look dwarfed by her presence because she embodies the vital force of life. Mr Banks cannot help adoring her secretly. He sees her as

“simply a woman...her beauty bored her and all that men say of beauty, and she wanted only to be like other people, insignificant.”⁵⁰ Lily intuitively perceives in him the quality of feeling that binds him with Mrs Ramsay in a certain delicate way: “This man had shared with her something profoundly intimate.”⁵¹ She sees in this love something “distilled and filtered.”⁵² In every way he is fascinated by Mrs Ramsay in numerous delightful ways: it is the kind of “love that never attempted to clutch its object.”⁵³ Lily sees in this love something deeply felt but unsaid; she thinks that “no woman could worship another woman in the way he worshipped.”⁵⁴ Mrs Ramsay addresses the inmost part of the others’ being in her dealings with them. She rises to the emotional pitch and frequency of the other and captures the essence. James’ insightful remark about her describes the extent of easy and free flowing natural rhythm of her life: “she was a person to whom one could say what came into one’s head.”⁵⁵

Mr Ramsay’s uncompromising love for truth makes him disagreeable to his children but Mrs Ramsay is instinctively aware of her husband’s inability to forge a lie. He does not want to encourage illusions in his children; he wants them to accept that “life is difficult.”⁵⁶ At times, she feels irritated at his truthfulness because it has put out her favourite son, James, “her youngest, her cherished.”⁵⁷ James enjoys a special bond with her. Her response at James’s frustration of wish by Mr. Ramsay and Tansley upset her greatly: “For this going to the Lighthouse was a passion of his.”⁵⁸ James, in turn, blames Mr Ramsay for putting rancour in “the perfect simplicity and good sense of his relations with his mother.”⁵⁹ She wishes her husband to hold the truth because it upsets her child; whereas, he insists on being true almost cruelly:

To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilisation so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency.”⁶⁰

She envisages that the men around are bent on breaking the wholeness of the little James's heart for the simple love of truth when they have failed to achieve that wholeness in their own lives. She is all for the affectionate, matronly care of her children. Her “image of fulfilled womanhood” signifies her desire to have a baby always.⁶¹ Her love for her children finds a special mention in the text, especially her relationship with James, “for she and James shared the same tastes and were comfortable together.”⁶² She understands that life does crush us all in the end, so her children cannot escape that doom in the future years; this foresight makes her more sympathetic and caring for them: “They were happier now than they would ever be again.”⁶³

Woolf juxtaposes the actual with the wordless contact between Mr and Mrs Ramsay. Both convey the meaning of the actual through a silent language of their own which could be understood at a very subtle level – a heart to heart secret understanding: “No, they could not share that; they could not say that.”⁶⁴ They send signals of mutual understanding through a silent look which seem to communicate the unsaid: “each knowing exactly what the other felt.”⁶⁵ As Auerbach argues, “the road taken by consciousness is sometimes traversed far more quickly than language is able to render.”⁶⁶ Silence expresses the otherwise inexpressible: “She was silent always.”⁶⁷ As Kern points out, “The Ramsays avoided the clichés of

love...because they were afraid to say anything at all."⁶⁸ There occurs a deep level of mutual intimacy between them after the dinner when they enter into "that unreal but penetrating and exciting universe which is the world seen through the eyes of love."⁶⁹ Mr Ramsay is engrossed into reading a book by Sir Walter Scott. Mrs Ramsay is simultaneously busy in knitting and watching intently her husband's response to the book he is reading; chanting a song, the words rhythmically dancing in her mind; reading here and there from a book. Suddenly she reminds herself of Tansley's remark about Sir Walter's books, and which she thinks could easily put out her husband because he might anticipate the fate of his own books at the hands of future readers. She senses the danger for "He was always uneasy about himself."⁷⁰ Her poetic sensibility at this moment is remarkably alive to any kind of sound around her. Her trust in her husband is the least shaky. Suddenly something gets momentum with the passing moments, engenders hyperactivity of her thought-processes: "There is something I want – something I have to get, and she fell deeper and deeper without knowing quite what it was."⁷¹ He reads something amusing and strokes his thighs, and in the meantime, their eyes meet and say it all in that understanding look: "They had nothing to say, but something seemed, nevertheless, to go from him to her."⁷² He rouses from the lethargy of the dinner talk into his real self; he reads a tragic part from the book and that transports him into a state of freedom. She reads it all. She looks radiant with a spirit of joyfulness. Under the admiring looks of Mr Ramsay, she feels the burning desire to express love for him but could not because "he knew, of course, he knew."⁷³

They affirm their deep and dignified love for each other "through the crepuscular walls of their intimacy."⁷⁴ This little episode of silent avowal of love redresses the wrong done in the earlier part of the day: "Woolf works it into one of Western literature's most poignant failures to express love."⁷⁵ One profoundly understanding look settles the score between them. None can at this moment of heart to heart secret understanding hinder Mr Ramsay from paying tribute to 'the beauty of the world': "This double renunciation of the word (the argument she had been verbalising as well as – and more important – what she did not say) is her triumph."⁷⁶ Lee sums up succinctly the magic of this scene: "The scene, by its logical fluidity (an intensification of the manner of the whole novel) gives the impression that both minds are simultaneously revealed to each other in silence, even though the narrative is really centred in Mrs Ramsay's consciousness."⁷⁷

At last, Mrs Ramsay could not endure her tearing apart any longer, and disappeared without dropping a hint. She did not die but disappeared into the Unknown all by herself. All her charm and characteristic beauty could not save her. Mr Ramsay's "fatal sterility" chokes her "delicious fecundity."⁷⁸ After Mrs Ramsay's mysterious death, "a downpouring of immense darkness began."⁷⁹ It seemed as if "divine goodness had parted the curtain."⁸⁰ Her death becomes a "penetrating inquiry into the meaning of the death of a beloved that moves in and out of the two characters who are most affected by it."⁸¹ Mr Ramsay feels suspended between life and death; the emotional void begins to engulf him like the sea engulfs an island: "Some said he was dead; some said she was dead."⁸² Lily perceives that the centre fell apart "as if the link that usually bound things together had been cut."⁸³ Mrs Ramsay kept the flame

of their lives burning by consuming herself: "Giving, giving, giving, she had died."⁸⁴ Lily hears Mr Ramsay's tragic chant for his tragic muse has departed: "Alone...Perished."⁸⁵ He cannot extricate himself from an impending sense of doom that they would bog down in the stream of life: "We are driving before a gale – we must sink."⁸⁶ Lily feels contemptuous of Mr Ramsay's preoccupation with himself: "Think of me, think of me."⁸⁷ Mr Ramsay could not endure the torture of life without her. His comfortable couch becomes a bed of thorns; he realizes the yawning gap within him which he later transforms into his love for children in remembrance of Mrs Ramsay's ghost of omniscient presence in the family. He makes a silent pact with the ghost of his wife to live through the glow of his feelings. He atones for the lack of contact with the nether world of his feelings which alone could have saved him. The resultant consciousness may be too much to bear for his sagging vitality but it could at least infuse that drunkenness which he has missed out all his life. He seems to be on his way to liberating his being enmeshed into the web of his own making. Finally, he sheds away the guilt for the attainment of 'the perfect moments of being'. Kern perceives marriage "potentially self-affirming" for it can "offer an exalted freedom similar to art" if "seriously pursued."⁸⁸

Despite Kern's perception of marriage as 'potentially self-affirming,' the novel continues to pose a serious question: Is marriage, after all, a destructive relationship for a genius even if pursued seriously? Mr Carmichael, an ageing poet, has been treated sympathetically by Woolf; he is rendered as "monumental, and contemplative...he was always content and dignified."⁸⁹ He is the only exception in the novel who avoids any contact with Mrs Ramsay; it is

possibly because he suffered ignominiously at the hands of his domineering wife whose common-sense perception of reality was antithetical to his poetic sensibility. If he had continued to stay trapped in his relationship with her, he would have ended up as an insignificant nothing. Nevertheless, Mr Carmichael proves himself an outstanding poet. It is evident that marriage proves destructive in his case. Mrs Ramsay foresees disintegration in the marriage of Paul and Minta – a young married couple Ramsays are friends with. In spite of these living examples of doomed marriages, Mrs Ramsay still believes marriage to be a fascinating experience in a woman's life: "an unmarried woman has missed the best of life."⁹⁰ She wishes that Lily should marry Mr Bankes. It gives a sound impression even at the beginning of the narrative that Lily "would never marry."⁹¹ Lily cudgels her brains in trying to see through the phenomenon of change with every passing moment: "For nothing was simply one thing."⁹² Mrs Ramsay sees in her "a flare of something; something of her own which Mrs Ramsay liked very much indeed, but no man would, she feared."⁹³ However, Goldman argues that Lily, "a cultural and sexual rebel" is an "antithesis to Mrs. Ramsay."⁹⁴ Woolf gives Lily an alternative mode of existence – her commitment to art; it could save her from the inconsistencies of a destructive marriage. Her decision to stay single implies the earlier blunder made by Mr Ramsay of getting married; his repeated references to "Someone had blundered" expresses it all in his suppressed tones from time to time.⁹⁵ Mr Bankes and Mr Ramsay's friendship lost its lustre when Mr Ramsay married. Lily anticipates her own doom of an incomplete artist if she stoops to marry. It is evident that for Mr Ramsay, the speculative genius, the burden of a relationship with his wife was too much to

bear. He could not go beyond the letter Q because he got his guts entangled into his family: “But the father of eight children has no choice.”⁹⁶ Mrs Ramsay perceives that “He should have been a great philosopher...but he had made an unfortunate marriage” (Woolf 9). Mrs Ramsay realises on another occasion that “he would have written better books if he had not married.”⁹⁷ As Lee points out, “At a realistic level it appears that the Ramsays’ marriage was an incompatible union between unsatisfactory characters whose plans for others were all unfulfilled.”⁹⁸ Even the children fail to fill up the gap between them, thus making it bigger and bigger.

At the end of the novel, Lily chooses to stay with the highest mode of sublimation – love and art. She reflects over Mrs Ramsay’s powerful influence upon her as nothing short of love: “for nothing so solaced her, eased her of the complexity of life, and miraculously raised its burdens, as this sublime power, this heavenly gift.”⁹⁹ She admires Mrs Ramsay so much that in spite of her control over her impulse, she wishes to express her love for ‘the beauty of the world’: “I’m in love with you?” No, that was not true. “I’m in love with this all”...It was absurd, it was impossible. One could not say what one meant.”¹⁰⁰ She contemplates oneness with Mrs Ramsay which cannot be translated into language: “For it was not knowledge but unity that she desired.”¹⁰¹ Lily cherishes her fond memories of Mrs Ramsay to make them a safeguard against her deeply emotional needs. She makes use of this ‘unity’ with Mrs Ramsay as an artistic prop of imagination. She seeks perfection through Mrs Ramsay’s painting, thus by paying back the dead with the same token of sublimation that she actually deserved all her life; Lily liberates herself from frozenness into a point of time where she conceived of

beauty in the form of Mrs Ramsay. The dignified presence of Mrs Ramsay in her consciousness becomes a composite whole by the final stroke of the paint brush “which becomes a symbol of the recapture of the meaning of Mrs Ramsay’s life.”¹⁰² Lily’s search for the “razor edge of balance between two opposite forces” finds an expression in her final stroke of the brush which completes her vision of love and art.¹⁰³ She conceives of Mrs Ramsay in terms of an art deity of beauty and she must invoke her to inspire an enduring work of art. What is the good of the increase of human consciousness if it cannot find a proper medium of expression? She expresses it through her art as Mrs Ramsay did through her consciousness of love. She feels rejuvenated as if one were in a state of dream still dreaming about the “august shape; the shape of a dome.”¹⁰⁴ Lily preserves it within the secret annals of her consciousness.

Lily ponders over the inadequacy of language as a means of communicating one’s emotions: “For how could one express in words these emotions of the body? Express that emptiness there?”¹⁰⁵ Her love for William Bankes remains unexpressed too: “Many things were left unsaid.”¹⁰⁶ She thinks it is not at all possible to say what actually one wants to: “The urgency of the moment always missed its mark. Words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low.”¹⁰⁷ She allows herself to repress her womanhood to make allowance for her commitment to art: the death to one self is coming into being of another. She dies in terms of the woman she is to live as an artist: “she would urge her own exemption from the universal law.”¹⁰⁸ She knows in the depths of her being that the world belongs to the average mind, and the exceptional minds have to bear the torment of isolation. She seeks authenticity through “the faculty of obedience to

perfection.”¹⁰⁹ Vogler sums up: “Mr Ramsay has become humanized; Lily has discovered eternal visionary truth; the ghost of Mrs Ramsay is laid to rest.”¹¹⁰

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**SITUATING SUBALTERN STRUGGLE IN NAJAM HOSSEIN SYED'S
PLAY *AWEIN NA HAI OH GAL***

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ABSTRACT

Post-colonial drama writers tend to highlight the continuities between colonialism and formal independence. These writers employ different means to challenge the hegemony of master discourse by using indigenous stories of resistance, employing folklores, experimenting with the medium of narrativity etc. In this theoretical backdrop, this article contends that Najam Hossein Syed, a Pakistani post-colonial drama writer, uses subaltern themes of resistance in his plays. Linking *subaltern subjects'* critical engagement with the traditional structures to find non-traditional structures for their struggle, this study analyses Najam Hossein Syed's play "Awein Na Hai O Gal" in post-colonial subaltern perspective. This attempt to find alternative/non-traditional structures of resistant has been explained through the operationalization of the concept of *counter-hegemony* by emphasizing upon the informal and non-elitist aspects of subaltern subjects' resistance.

KEY WORDS

Subaltern Subject, Counter-Hegemony, Post-Colonial, literature, Punjab.

Najam Hossein Syed is the most prolific writer who writes in Punjabi. He has written more than 40 books published so far and are widely known in the circles working on Punjabi history and language-based Punjabi movements. His literary works comprises of the diverse literary genres. He has written drama, poetry and prose. He is known for his experimental ways with these literary genres. More importantly his work can be seen as a bridge between traditional Punjabi oral tradition and the formal requirements of modern literature. It is at this point where he seems incorporating themes of class struggle, subaltern subjects and gender relations. He has positioned himself against mainstream Marxist writers, writing in Urdu, which is the national language of the country. A theatrical group *Sangat* inspired from his plays has started to perform his plays. It is important to notice that he does not associate language as a marker of ethnic identity rather he links it with class and world-view. He considers language as an important source and resource of class struggles. Previously there is very little research available on post-colonial regional language plays in the context of Pakistan. Most of the literature available on this subject deal with drama as a performative genre in which a very little attention has been given to the text itself. This becomes quite

apparent by examining the local¹ and foreign² scholarship about political theatre³. On another level the work of Najam Hossein Syed has been discussed under areas like language movement⁴, Punjabi heroism⁵, cultural politics of left and ethnicity versus nationality⁶. Apart from Sara Kazmi and Eugene Van Erven no one has identified Post-Colonial Subaltern stream in the plays of Najam Hossein Syed. However, even both of these writers do not exclusively discuss this stream in detail. For example Sara's work is on the cultural politics of MKP (Mazdoor Kishan Party), and Eugene Van Erven has discussed this theme in the plays of Najam Hossein Syed under the rubric of Asian theater.

This fixation of Najam and primarily his plays owes its reason to the dearth of academic literature present on the subject of post-colonial drama in the context of pakistan and in its regional languages. According to Chris Banfield post-colonial writers and critics themselves do not know about their indigenous knowledge especially the work produced in them.⁷ Research on post-colonial subaltern themes is a fertile ground because it not only identify and fill research gap but also link it with other similar themes emerging from the work of post-colonial drama writers writing in indigenous language. The plays of Uptal Dutt⁸ bear close resemblance with the work of Najam Hossein Syed. "*Ha arman Sassi ko aiha Kaich de Malka thesan jud pernisan*" (it was the desire of *Sassi* to become the queen of *Kaich* after getting married).

The paly start from this song and *Setho* is the singer who is singing this folk song. Suddenly, from within the circle (In Punjab traditionally the performance was done in a circle without formal stage settings) an old man started to voice his discontentment from the song. He was not happy with the line, “.... *Kaich de Malka thesan jud parmesan*” (to become the queen of Kaich after getting married). He says that it was not what *Sassi*⁹ desired or *Sassi*’s story is not like that. *Setho*, got disturbed and stopped singing. The old man was a washer man from Multan. *Setho*, asked from the washer man about the real story of *Sassi*. Washer man told *Setho* to come on the first of the moon if she wants to know the truth behind this story. *Setho* went to Multan and found old man dead. There in Multan she met with the relative of the old man, *Rummo*. *Rummo* told *Setho* that she had an idea what old man was saying. Hearing this *Setho* decided to live with *Rummo*. Both started to perform in the processions, political gatherings, left wing cultural events, etc. The plot of the play moves forward and we see the British time in the play during which anti-colonial movements are shown. *Setho*, along with *Rummo* joins a factory trade union which was headed by their male comrade Shafique. On the parallel of their struggle nationalist struggle against British colonial rule is at full swing. The nationalist struggle is dominated by the male religious leaders and sometimes *Setho* and *Rummo* are being mocked by the proponents of the nationalist anti-colonial struggle.

Plot of the play moves further and we observe the formation of Pakistan. However, there is not much mentioning of the creation of Pakistan as if, the creation of Pakistan is being depicted in continuity with British rule.

Samad, a new character is introduced in the middle of the play who becomes the owner of factory after the death of his father. Samad has been shown as a modern educated Marxist in the play. He joins hands with *Setho*, *Rummo* and *Shafique* and forms a party. He writes in English and Urdu about the party and its struggle. *Setho*, criticise Samad on the use of English and Urdu and says that people's struggle should be documented in people's language. Samad responds to this by saying that for documenting our struggle Urdu and English languages and terminologies in them are essential. *Setho* further responds by saying that these terminologies in Urdu and English were quite synonymous to colonial rule and now you intellectuals have re-introduced them.

The play enters in the time period of 1980s in Pakistan where, there is ban on political activities and political leaders were thrown behind the bars. Samad leaves Pakistan and settles in another foreign country and Shafique takes refuge in Islam by leaving all his political activities. On this occasion *Jhamri*, a relative of *Setho* meets *Rummo* and *Setho* and taunts that where are your *Punals* who wanted to make you the queen of *kaich*. *Rummo* and *Setho* remained alone while Samad and Shafique moved to different directions by

accepting and naturalizing different discourses. The subaltern within subaltern stands alone but ready to fight and resist. The play ends with a dialogue between three women (*Ramo, Setho* and *Jhamri*) in which they discuss that a fight on internal cultural front is essential for change.

COUNTER-HEGEMONY AND SUBALTERN SUBJECT

In the plays of Najam Hossein Syed the engagement of “Subaltern Subjects”, with the traditional institution is based on the desire of the new-ways of engagement. We have used the term counter-hegemony for these structures. The traditional structures include in his plays include political party (left-wing party but rooted in the traditional morass of ruling hegemony), workplace, education institutions, etc. The effort for alternative representation which we will call the counter-hegemony include Punjabi language, rumour, informal cultural networks, institution of bazar, pre-colonial local heroes and contextualized ideals by them through active history making process.

Gramsci believes that any strategy which does not overthrow the hegemony of ruling class cannot represent subaltern classes, groups and subjects. The elite do not rule through coercion rather it rules through consent of the subordinate classes. This explains that Gramsci is concerned with a complete cultural reorientation on the part of subaltern classes and their local leaders and language is an essential component in this strategy. Gramsci considers

language a political subject. It contains details like curriculum, official state language policy and most importantly which class uses¹⁰. The use of particular language by ruling classes makes it a language of state ideology and it severs a position of ideological state apparatus (this concept is being explained earlier in the sections). In this regard, the post-colonial writers have tended to move away from the master languages and those languages which were tailored by colonial rulers to suit their needs of political and administrative control. Drawing on Gramsci, it can be argued that the decolonising language is one of the important aspects of subaltern struggle, therefore, is the prime responsibility of those who claim their voices for subaltern or associate themselves with subaltern struggle. Najam, in this regard, serves as one of the important cases which is pursuing this case by not only producing alternative historical struggle and historiography but also by using the Punjabi language which has always been outside the patronage of colonial and post-colonial state apparatus.

Gramsci considers 'hegemony', as an ideological base of political, cultural and institutional power. The ruling groups create hegemony to secure their economic base. Mere analysis of economic condition does not guarantee successful revolution¹¹. For the overthrow of ruling bloc hegemony, "counter-hegemony" is required. Gramsci believed that counter-hegemony cannot succeed if it does not incorporate the interests of subaltern classes. In the context of

Italy subaltern classes were southern peasants who were more oppressed than northern proletariat.¹² This shows that how Gramsci knows that the workforce is not homogeneous. He believes that in order to represent them their world view must be incorporated. Subaltern subjects are not completely indoctrinated in the hegemony of the ruling bloc mainly because they have very little access to these networks of power. The relation of hegemony based on coercion and consent is not final but the above stated position tells that this relation is also a key site for resistance. Ranajit Guha, believes that subaltern identity is so much compromised that it does not get fully captured by the dominant mode of existence. He in a way glorifies this position because it generates the possibilities of counter-hegemony.¹³

Ernesto Laclau and Chantle Mouffe¹⁴ are important Post-Marxist theorist. They build their theory on the basis of hegemony rather than economic category of class reductionism. They use Gramsci in their theoretical position and assign pivotal position to the question of language as a form of discourse. Ernesto Laclau and Chantle Mouffe believe that the relationship between signifier and signified is not fixed. This produce a discursive space in which meanings and concepts are negotiated in multiple ways but when discourse takes its roots it acquires the discursive space. Language becomes powerful instrument of hegemony through which it operates and limits multiple options¹⁵. Obviously, that dominant discourse

comes through language. In this context Najam takes Urdu and English as a part of problem through which subaltern struggle is difficult to represent. Language is key site of domination and control through which dominant groups rule over suppressed groups. Post-colonial writers have discussed this debate in great length.

We will use the subaltern subjects as those subjects who do not have easy access to the means of modern communication due to their historical marginality based on different factors such as gender and caste. Subaltern subjects are difficult to define because different post-colonial theorist has defined them in different ways. For example, Ranajit Guha considers Indian peasants and their rebellions against colonial rule as a form of subaltern struggle against dominant groups¹⁶. Gramsci considers those groups which have been more marginalized as subaltern subjects such as for him Southern-Italian peasants¹⁷. Gayatri Spivak sees subaltern subjects as those who do not have any access to the modern means of communication which curtails their ability to link themselves with hegemonic discourses¹⁸.

PERFORMANCE AS TEXT AND THE DETAILED ANALYSIS

Awain Na Hai O Gal, was performed by *Sangat* on numerous occasion. We ourselves witnessed the performance of the play on the Faiz Ahmad Faiz conference in Lahore (here we are taking performance as text). The amazing thing about the performance was

its strict adherence to the original script of the play as written by Najam Hossein Syed. The performance was a symbolic representation of the conception of counter-hegemony. It was the critique on the nationalist symbols of the leftist struggle in Pakistan ultimately becoming the part of status quo. It was the only Punjabi (local language) play at the Faiz Ahmad Faiz conference other plays were in Urdu language. At the occasion of its performance there were many notable leftist political and literary figures of Pakistan. Tariq Rehman one of the most influential academic on languages in Pakistan identify language as a primary marker of ethnic identity and consider language as a sensitive political question. He also sheds light on the aspect of worldview. Tariq believes that languages carry a particular understanding of the world and how we make sense of our surroundings. the choice of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan represents state led Islamic Nationalism¹⁹.

“Awain Na Hai O Gal” is a critique on the mind-set and strategy of leftist struggle in Pakistan because of the use of Urdu language and no knowledge of cultural system of the areas constituting Pakistan and especially Punjab. The play uses allegory, metaphors and fills them with folk traditions to show a cultural specific resistance to produce a counter-hegemony of the subaltern classes which does not fell prey to mainstream ideology. The gendered relationships and expectations have been questioned in the play along with the strategies through which subaltern women

can take the role of leadership in the struggle against hegemony. Languages, vocabulary, world view, myths, folklores, reinterpretation of tradition are those avenues through which counter-hegemony can be launched even though all the characters of the play are fully caught in the structural hegemony.

Kamran Asdar Ali in his recent work²⁰ on the history of communism in Pakistan has explained in detail about the pitfalls of the leftist struggle in Pakistan. There is no other academic work available which has explored this area in greater detail. So, for the analysis of this play we will use the text of Kamran Asdar Ali as my primary text. According to Kamran Asdar Ali, Pakistan was emerged on those areas in which most members of CPI (communist party of India) were Hindus and Sikhs. They migrated to India. Most of the members of the CPI who migrated to Pakistan from India after partition were not aware of the cultural realities of this region. Sajjad Haider, the founder of CPP (communist party of Pakistan) was helped by the Bombay office party workers. The way of Sajjad Haider was to work in the urban areas with the middle class, students and artists. The major chunk of working class population was side-lined in the discussion on labour unions and communist movement in Pakistan²¹.

In Sindh and Punjab leftist political parties and trade unions were already present even before the creation of Pakistan. However, CPI (communist party of India) had very little presence in these areas. After the creation of Pakistan communist party of Pakistan did not use these local leftist parties. The local leftist political parties were also reluctant to work with the communist party of Pakistan because in the elections of 1945-46 CPI supported Muslim league and later termed the creation of Pakistan as an imperialist plot. This policy had a bad impact on the local workers of CPI Punjab and it also distanced the local leftist forces present in Punjab. In Punjab since the 1920s there was a stronghold of parties like Ghadar party, Kissan sabah party and to name a few others. However, the central leadership of CPI and later CPP was trained in north Indian ahrar ways which made it very difficult for them to interact these local political parties²².

It is quite surprising to see that in one of his plays "*Sammi De Vaar*", Najam Hossein Syed has discussed the Ghadar party active in the 1920s in Punjab. This shows that Najam's position is quite like the argument of Kamran Asdar Ali that local leftist political forces were not taken into confidence by CPI earlier and later CPP despite their well entrenched presence in Punjab and Sindh. Najam has criticised these urban trends in the communist party of Pakistan and the subsequent leftist struggle in Pakistan on the lines and foundations coming from the central command of communist party before and after the partition. The legitimization of

Ghadar party in Punjab is a counter-hegemonic strategy of Najam Hossein Syed through which he tends to prove the necessity of the rootedness of the resistance.

According to Kamran Asdar Ali the progressive writers' association PWA²³, was influenced by Marxist ideas since its very inception. Both CPI and PWA were founded by Indians studying in England at that time and were inspired by the communist ideas. PWA invited writers from all over the India writing in different languages, however, its strength lay in the Urdu Hindi writers. Progressive writers' association and its members were also North-Indian Ashraf who was not sympathetic to other regional languages. After the creation of Pakistan, the writers of PWA remained in the same mind-set. They used and encouraged Urdu for their purpose. They were few dissenting voices among the proponents of PWA but most of them believed that Urdu should be the national language of Pakistan. In one of the plays of Najam Hossein Syed "*Haar De Phull*" there is a criticism on this approach of Sajjad Zahir and Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi for their relentless support to Urdu and their Urdu writings. This theme is further extended in the play *Awain Na Hair O Gal*. The figures of Samad and Shafique are somehow a symbolic representation of Sajjad Zaheer and Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi. Both left

subaltern people alone and adopted ideologies which were given to them by hegemonic powers. Shafique turned towards religion and thought it to be the ultimate refuge and Samad became a romantic Marxist who without understanding the cultural background of subaltern masses believed in the western textbook Marxist formula for change.

Samad and Shafique do represent a classical face of leftist struggle in Pakistan culminating in the ideology of state and imperialism. Both Samad and Shafique leave the party and represent apparently different streams of ideology but in a broader level mutually beneficial. When state repression increased in 1980s in the play both Samad and Shafique left Pakistan and abandoned their political struggle. Samad wrote a letter to *Setho*, "I know you will not forgive me but I seek your apology. I have decided to live here. After the death of my father I became the owner of factory but I have decided to give the responsibilities of the factory to my son. He has completed his education from Russia but he thinks like his grandfather. I did what I could have done best but the world has changed. Capitalism has very firm roots. We were unable to recognize the extent of capitalism. Maybe to understand capitalism we need to live and work with it. Maybe it will present its own solution. I know that you will not support my claim. You are right on your place. I again seek your apology because whatever I did there was because of you..."²⁴. The letter of Samad reveals a lot in the context of leftist

struggle in Pakistan. The elites coming from modern education and urban middle-class background tried to represent the subaltern but when the situation became difficult due to state repression and the overall decline in the leftist politics after the downfall of Russia left politics either leaving country or started their NGOs. However, subalterns like *Setho* and *Rummo* remained there.

Najam Hossein Syed in this play has also emphasised that such efforts on the part of urban intellectuals are deemed to fail because they cannot represent subaltern and their internal logic guiding their day to day life. The desire on the part of these intellectuals to document people's struggle in specific jargons and terms are the part of the problem because system of hegemony imposed on subaltern classes also gives its critique. In the case of Samad we see that the language of the letter is quite like a western Marx which believes in the textbook formula for the purpose of revolution rather than incorporating the culture of people in the counter hegemony strategy. The very emphasis on the complex system of capitalism and an engagement with it shows how hegemony works as a structural power to accommodate its dissent. Shafique also writes a letter to *Rummo* for explaining his position. "I do not have regret on what happened with us here.

Whatever we did, we thought was true but the decision of history is different. History has its own logic. I rediscovered the lost faith when I reached here. The things we considered joke, gave me peace here. You will not admit this but this is the real solution. Religion is neither opium nor joke. We do not have any place without firm believe in religion. Our strength was our relation but now if we have to meet than you have to come on this way. I have believed that you will come here also".²⁵

The letter of shafique to *Rummo* shows what Najam laments on the importance of language for subaltern representation. The character of Samad is a classic example of those early Marxist thinkers and activists in Pakistan who believed that national language Urdu should be the medium through which counter-hegemony struggle can be launched. Language is a key site for the formation of ruling bloc hegemony and master languages like English and Urdu have served this purpose in the context of Pakistan. Urdu served the purpose of state led Islamic nationalism and a whole new vocabulary charged with religious sentiments was came into Urdu after partition of India. This is the reason Najam uses Punjabi because of its secular worldview and its capacity to generate counter-hegemonic strategies.

However, one cannot blindly accept the reasons for the failure of leftist struggle in Pakistan as what Najam Hossein Syed believes. The element of state repression cannot be ruled out along with other

reason. There is no denying the fact that the leftist struggle in Pakistan failed to de-class itself but the aspect of state repression is also important. The play shows the draconian period of 1980s in Pakistan to show the end of all political activities and the state led atrocities, however, according to Kamran Asdar Ali the leftist struggle was fizzled out well before 1980s

On the other hand, both *Setho* and *Rummo* had different ideas and an internal logic which cannot be fully co-opted by the hegemony despite the fact they are also under the structure of hegemony. This is a key site through which *Najam* represents subaltern struggle. In the play, we see that even though both *Setho* and *Rummo* are structurally oppressed under the ruling hegemony but they do not go for the options taken by *Samad* and *Shafique*. *Rummo* and *Setho* adopt modern way of confrontation with their subjugation by becoming a part of a political party which is a modern way of resisting hegemony. However, they maintain their own position and use colonial discourse of political party in their own interest to challenge hegemony. This shows their relationship with modern ways of engagement with the political struggle. Language, vocabulary and a particular world view shared by *Rummo* and *Setho* is different from the hegemony and the struggle is

being operated and articulated outside structural power.

These subaltern characters explore their own position in the gendered hierarchy of subaltern struggle. Gayatri Spivak in “imaginary maps” (1994) shed lights on the phenomenon of subaltern women and believes that in any such struggle these women dismiss internalized gender constraints which inhibits their becoming of organic intellectual. In the course of the play we see this theme very prominent in the subaltern representation of Najam Hossein Syed.

PEOPLE'S LANGUAGE

Setho: “...why dont your writing speaks the language of the people? ...”

Samad: “...don't we use the language of the people? We talk in the same language?”

Setho: “I am talking about writing Samad”

Samad: “they read Urdu in school. Why should we waste this privilege? Do we have time to popularize the new terminology?”

Setho: “what you write remains out.”

Samad: “... Do you consider urdu or English as bookish and outsider?”

Setho: “those words and constructions through which governments operate. Through which ownership is tied and protected. Elites feel themselves as being

different after reading and writing these words and constructions."

These dialogues between Samad and *Setho* are of utmost importance to understand the subaltern representation in the plays of Najam Hossein Syed. Samad being a foreign educated Samad believes that they should document their struggle for propagation of people's right but *Setho* objects on the selection of language. It is interesting to note that she is not against the documentation of struggle rather the language and terms it employs. Language for *Setho* is a classical question of class and social mobility. *Setho* knows that language is a key site through which ruling hegemony operates. She is also aware of the fact that even the subaltern classes use certain terms if they get translated have similar mining as in English and Urdu but the control and meaning over Urdu and English is being exercised by ruling classes. This shows that the question of language for subaltern struggle in the postcolonial context is very important for Najam Hossein Syed but for samad class comes in more sophisticated terms of economics. *Setho* rightly identifies urdu and English as master languages necessarily operating and linked with the working of Sarkar (government). The medium through which ruling hegemony operates can never be an effective strategy to represent subaltern classes. On the other hand

Samad has no such believe because for him the strategy of representation is important rather than inquiring that very strategy. Gayatri Spivak is of the view that efforts to represent subaltern often further silence them because the structure of representation itself is hegemonic²⁶. Language is an essential component of the structure of representation. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Najam does not use language in ethnic context rather he associates power and resistance with the language.

Language is also an important part of subaltern struggle and representation because it involves an attitude of learning from the subaltern classes. Moreover, the inability of subaltern classes to articulate themselves in the master language is also a blessing in disguise. The presence of subaltern at the fringes of mainstream thought also implies that they despite being entangled in structural hegemony they do not fully ascribe to it when it comes to the articulation of their self. Through a master language it is not possible to become the part of subaltern life. Gayatri Spivak in her seminal essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak", is sceptical on the representation of subaltern subjects. She believes that the efforts to bring the voices of subaltern subjects by European and native intellectuals further silence them. The presence of subaltern voices at the fringes remains there because acts of representation tend to further strengthen the hegemonic centres. However, this does not mean that efforts to represents doomed to fail rather it suggests

caution in the final act of representation. The process of representation is not neutral for her. However, the possibility of representation resides in following certain protocols. For this purpose, she believes that "ethical singularity"²⁷ is important with the subaltern subjects. Through this author tend to learn to unlearn his/her privilege²⁸. Certain privileged positions do not allow us to see our own prejudices and power which have enabled us to understand about the other (subaltern subjects). When one tend to unlearn these privileges then other forms of knowledge make sense and the possibility of alternative avenues become easy.

Samad's insistence that he cannot write and document struggle in local languages implies his impatience which is an example of an attitude bent on subaltern representation as ethical task without being democratically engaging with the subaltern classes. Here democratic engagement implies that subaltern existence should be considered by becoming a part of them for the sake of representation.

IDEAS OF POLITICS

The play tends to break the official serial time of the history of India from 1920s onwards. The resistance against colonial rule is not represented through congress-Muslim League perspective rather the very breakdown of linear events is an attempt on the part

of Najam Hossein Syed to create a situation full of possibilities. These conditions of multiple possibilities are an important task and strategy for subaltern representation. The presence and struggle of subaltern classes at different junctures of history without relating to the abstract notion of state and official struggle against colonialism is a key site of subaltern representation in the play. This also shows the condition of presence of the subaltern classes because they exist without formal institutional identity at a broader level. The presence of subaltern characters outside the official political avenues and their inability to relate with them marks the beginning of subaltern politics in the play of Najam Hossein Syed.

Unlike Gramsci who believes that organic intellectual must fulfil the task of subaltern representation Najam Hossein Syed in this play assigns a pivotal importance to cultural workers and shows how *Setho* renders her artistic labour for the benefit of subaltern class. This shows that the artistic labour of subaltern cultural worker must be used for the uplift of subaltern classes. When *Setho* started her journey to explore the real story of *Sassi* she started to live with *Rummo*. This made her realize that she should join a party and use her artistic labour for her own class. She along with *Rummo* joined a leftist political party which was headed by Samad. However, this makes us question the novelty of subaltern representation in this play because the insertion of *Setho* and *Rummo* is a given space largely culminating from the traditional

public sphere. Even the leftist political party is a given condition of critique from the overall structure of hegemonic power. However, *Setho* does not affiliate with the methods of Samad, who bent on working with the lens of western Marxism. She tends to disagree with the use of language and fails to affiliate with the politics of leftist political power who not only misrepresent but produce artistic alienation of labour in *Setho* and *Rummo*. These are they key areas of subaltern politics in the play of Najam Hossein Syed.

GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

“Ha arman *Sassi* ko aiha Kaich de Malka thesan jud pernisan” (it was the desire of *Sassi* to become the queen of Kaich after getting married). This was the line which made *Setho* explore the real story of *Sassi*. When she joined Samad and Shafique along with *Rummo* in a political party, she became aware of the internalizrd gender constraints in her becoming organic intellectual. *Sassi* wanted to become the queen on the basis of getting married to Puno but the old washer man disagrrred that it is not the story of *Sassi*. To discover the truth of *Sassi* story, *Setho* started her journey to find out the truth. Druing her struggle in the party she works with Samad and Shafique but both of her male comrades leave political party and resort to different lines. They call both *Sassi* and *Rummo* on those lines which they have adopted for themselves. In a way it is a critique of male dominated leadership in subaltern struggle in which subaltern women is

supposed to work under male comrades and follow their guidelines. However, both *Setho* and *Rummo* stay and their place and do not go with Samad and Shafique. On this situation Jhamri(relative of *Setho*) taunts both *Rummo* and *Setho* that where are your punal now?

This is very interesting to observe that Najam Hossein syed does not homogenize subaltern identity and struggle. There are always gender lines in subaltern characters and classes and these genders lines have to be addressed in any such struggle. Unlike, Sammad and Shafique both *Setho* and *Rummo* remain committed to their cause and decided to continue their struggle on a smaller scale.

RE-INVENTION OF TRADITION

In post-colonial literature the use of tradition in a resistant way is quite popular. Many post-colonial writers and critics use tradition to show that their respective cultures had always an answer to oppression and an idealism guiding the final outcome of struggle. As a literary device they use allegories to give cultural meanings to their characters.²⁹ For example the story of *Sassi* is well known in punjab but Najam Hossein Syed has interpreted and used it in a different way. *Sassi* has been used as a subaltern women trying to change the world without necessarily relying on fellow men. However, it is not only the working of tradition we find in this play but infact re-inventing them in a different way contrary to popular

memory. The old washer man from Multan objected to the performance of *Setho* when she described that *Sassi* wanted to be the queen of Kaich. *Setho*, realized after her journey that they can not depend on their fellow men for subaltern leadership. Both Samad and Shafique left the struggle, so, if *Sassi* has to do something for the subaltern cause then she had to dismantle gendered lines which obstruct her becoming subaltern representative. This shows how Najam reads these cultural stories and use them for resistance through an interplay of tradition and innovation.

CONCLUSION

The post-colonial subaltern stream is quite visible in Punjabi plays of Najam Hossein Syed. Drama has mostly been discussed and worked as a performative genre in the context of Pakistan. There is a very little research available on the regional language plays other than English in other parts of world and Pakistan. Like many other post-colonial writers, language is a key issue for Najam. He believes that language is linked with class and the use of master language English and other tailored language like Urdu is a form of hegemony. To represent subaltern, struggle the language should present a worldview quite akin with subaltern life-style. His plays show continuities between historical past and present. Like other postcolonial writers he disregards colonial discourse and tends to incorporate resistant stories emerging from the native land. He uses them in such a way that

it appears reinvention of tradition in form and style along with story. Najam's use of Punjabi language and his insistence of relying upon subaltern subjects as they are embedded in local history is an example of trying to explore new avenues of resistance to which we refer to as counter-hegemony. The importance of local language is related to the protocols he establishes in his plays, so, that the subaltern resistance finds new avenues and it can be represented. Apart from language, use of local heroes, local history, style, gender considerations and critique on the nationalist symbol of leftist struggle in subaltern struggle are few other facets of counter-hegemony of subaltern classes. The inability of the subaltern to access any conventional ways of communication but its presence at the margins of traditional structures help them not to reproduce the dominant hegemony. They do not internalize the discourse of hegemonic power because of their vulnerability. This does not imply the glorification of the oppression rather it seeks to trace potential for struggle.

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²³ Progressive Writers Association was formed by Indian students studying in England in 1930s. Malik Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer were prominent members of Progressive Writers Association. It was inspired by Marxist ideas.

²⁴ Self translation of the play Awein Na Hai oh Gal by Najm Hossein Syed.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Louai, *Retracting the Concept of Subaltern*,

²⁷ Ethical singularity implies a relationship which is based on the attitude that the people who represent subaltern groups should tend to learn from them. The most important reason that subaltern remains at the periphery are that the privileged representatives of first and third world are unable to hear them. The attempts to represent should establish a relationship based on ethics rather than representation like constituency (reference from the reader).

²⁸ Unlearning one's privilege in Gayatri's sense is an attempt to understand other kinds of knowledge which we might have not leaned because of our position. For example, the use of Punjabi language by Najam tells that the change of language brings a new world view and one tends to notice those things which are not

possible through English and Urdu. The critical engagement with one's position through one's history is very important in unlearning one's privilege.

²⁹ Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002)., 110-122.

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