

Tracing the Development of Capitalism across South Asian Writings

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Abstract Literary works from the peripheries of South Asian countries as Pakistan and India have been functional in diverting the overriding western operative logic of pure aesthetics. At the same time, these writings highlight the inequities perpetuated by capitalism and its corollaries which globally persists as neocolonialism and neo-liberal imperialism. With an overview of the literary works from pre-partition and post-partition India and Pakistan, the paper illustrates how these crucial writings weigh against the homogenizing, ahistorical and essentializing readings of capitalism spread across European and American literary works. Despite the diverse framings, the arc of all these literary writings forge connections between capitalism's detrimental legacy through tropes that represent the ruinous shared histories of European colonization, and catastrophic effects of American imperialism. In addition, the paper argues that the writings from peripheries which critically disclose the genesis of capitalism, and its subsequent forms have the potential to transform the history of English literature. The study gives an overview of how these literary voices resonate strong resentment against the oppressive systems and most authentically reflect the struggle for freedom and equality across different cultures and classes. Significantly, these writings persistently exhibit distinct cultural expressions that reveal capitalism in sites where race, power, language, and empire intersect. In summary, the paper cannot emphasize enough that English literary canon will gain immensely by including translations

of these literary works from South Asia that defiantly expose the inter-sectional consequences of capitalism.

Keywords peripheries; regional literature ; capitalism; South Asian Literature; cultural writings

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Introduction

Literary writings from the peripheries of the third World bring forth the varied experiences of capitalism and consequently, have the potential to fill in the obliterations and absences in western theorizations on the history of capitalism. The paper presents an overview of the Literary works and theatrical performances that underwrite the concerns regarding contemporary global crises of fascism and persisting capitalism from across the third world countries. Drawing from Marxist literary theorists, the paper argues that attention to these literary contributions will redress the Western theoretical scarcities. More importantly, this study cannot stress more on the significance of merging new writings in the English canon under the rubric of “World literature” (Williams 116).

The glaring obscurities in theorizations on the genesis of capitalism in western discourses cannot be overlooked. According to Blaut, most Social Science treatises on the birth of capitalism exhibit glaring obscurities which are perpetuated by “obliterated accounts of the history of slavery, colonialism and imperialism” (Blaut 374). The renowned Argentinian political theorist and philosopher Ernest Laclau asserts that the European accounts of capitalism have been both “vacant and homogenous” by mainly comprising of theories shaped by “eliminating differences” (45-46). Anievas & Nişancıoğlu attribute these “highly abstract” versions on the history of capitalism to a glaring “absence of non-European agency in writing” (14). In a similar vein, in 1986, the American literary critic and theorist Fredric Jameson

published an essay in the journal *Social Text* titled “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” that radically questions the categorization of all western literary works as “great texts” from “great minds” consisting of “great ideas” (67).

Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu in the book titled *How the West Came to Rule* contend that unarguably no one is closer to have founded the trajectory of capitalist world-system in western literature than Karl Marx himself. Karl Marx’s earliest works provide the basic guidelines to the genesis of capitalism. Marx traces the birth of capitalism from “the conquest and plunder of India”, to “the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins” and continues systemically to anticipate “the combination that embraces the colonies, the national debt, the modern tax system” (915). Understanding the birth of capitalism necessitates an expansive interpretation, one that is not temporally and spatially concentrated to one nation or one locale. This elucidates the contemporary form of capitalism and its “extensive re-embedding” across the world called as “neo-liberal globalization” or “neo-liberal imperialism¹” (Radice 97-98). To navigate the terrain, later theorists offered similar views on how this subsumption of the “non-colonized spaces” could be traced through the study of the process of colonization and conquest that led to economic and political domination (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu 21).

In Frederic Jameson’s view, the third world literature categorized as “allegories²” features specific “political resonances”. The terminology “Third world literature” broadly describes literature from “developing and underdeveloped” countries. These forms of writing allow heterogeneities and discontinuities to explicitly appear in literature. As the essay dealt with the situation of the writer and the text in the contemporary world system, Jameson built up a case for the acceptance of third world literature in the English canon. Jameson proposes the Western critics and theorists grappling with the unusual “cognitive-aesthetics of the third-world literature” to acquaint themselves to this “unfamiliar” kind of “allegorical vision” (88). Jameson’s upfront challenge not only derails the Eurocentric notions of Western critics as the “trained readers or the informed critics”, more importantly, it highlights the innate potential of these literary works as distinctive productive forces of cultural transformation (Williams 118). Herbert

1 For more discussions on neo-liberal globalization see, Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century*.

2 Frederic Jameson studied the Great Chinese work *Diary of a Madman* (1918) as one of examples of third-world literature.

Marcuse made a similar plea in his essay *Art as form of Reality* published in the *Left Review* in 1972. According to Marcuse, an insightful understanding of the subversive and revolutionary character of art necessitates a total radicalization of consciousness. This in turn requires “an end of the segregation of the aesthetic from the real” (Marcuse 1972). These advanced notions on the universality of aesthetics are sporadically found in the German philosopher and critic Immanuel Kant’s work. Kant described the presence of “pure forms of sensibility” as universal and thus almost reflexively claimed it to be “common to all human beings¹”. Stefan Morawski’s acute analysis on the aesthetic views of Marx and Engels establish more relevant insights. Morawski holds that for Marx “Tendentiousness, a latent tendency in art” remains as the most crucial character of all creative works. He identifies aesthetic experience as tendentious through its synthetic character brought about by “a commingling of emotional, sensual, and intellectual elements” (307).

However, chained in the infrastructure of advanced capitalist societies, the tendentiousness in new literary works in the West disappeared. Eric J. Hobsbawm in the book *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century* remarked that the “western literary art failed to find new bearings in the new age of technology” (103). Hobsbawm views western writers and artists had started submitting to the dictates and demands of the capitalist market which resulted in overall deterioration. In a similar way, Raymond Williams had voiced capitalism’s pervasiveness as the reason for bringing about an almost inevitable deterioration in Western literary writings. In his view, the reigning ethos of “trivialism” in contemporary western writings validated the writer’s anxiety in a capitalist world (119). Through successive productions of specific genres, literature “masqueraded as an intellectual activity” produced a culture that lacked aesthetic merit (120). A recent example of the decline can be seen through the surge in “Dystopian fiction¹”: a successful genre that unfortunately enjoys broad popular appeal. The post humanist contemporary critic and philosopher Rosi Braidotti censures the dystopian fiction calling it as “the literature and cinema of extinction of our and other species”. Braidotti displays frustrations with writings built on “the narrow and negative social imaginary as techno-teratological” (63-64). For Braidotti, the popularity of dystopian fiction as an object of cultural admiration is no less than an aberration. Overall, it appears, that the recent western literary productions fail to grasp the material conditions that have produced the present social and political systems and

1 Examples of Dystopian popular film productions include films titled as: *Divergent*, *The Hunger Games*, *Contagion*. Also, see an interesting write-up by Stevens, Dana. “Why Teens Love Dystopias.” *Slate* (2014).

consequently, remain evasive both in form and content.

Interestingly though literature from the African American writers have summoned new themes in novel art forms. To rearticulate the painful history of “Black Oppression” that continues to this day, the African American poets, writers and playwrights have produced radically new “Black aesthetic forms” that have familiarized the American literary tradition with extensive features from African folk lore, music, social history, personal experiences. African American writers as Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Munro have made astonishing literary contributions that reflect on the various inequitable social formations in the ostensibly liberal democratic State of America. Moreover, Black literature in its varied and diverse representational forms evokes history of capitalism. Experiences of slavery, historically essential to the understanding of the capitalist infrastructure of America, are recollected in the form of biographies, and personal memoirs, both in fiction and non-fiction. An inextricable part of the recent African American writings are writings etched on “personal experiences of capitalist relations, practices, and institutions that continue to perpetuate oppression for black individuals in everyday circumstances” (Einhorn 492). More recently, in the aftermath of the horrendous murder of George Floyd¹, writings as part of the ‘Black arts movement’ interrogate the political climate in contemporary America and have started to show more penetrating influence on the overall cultural milieu.

Attentive readings of African writers help in identifying social relations of power and exploitation in complicated and variegated forms. Set in neocolonialized Africa, several literary works represent “a new crisis of representation” (Avineas & Nişancioğlu 16). From a historical context, the colonial hasty departures from the continents of Africa and Asia, as expressed by Franz Fanon in the form of freedoms “given” as opposed to “taken”, were superseded by constant forms of backwardness. Social, and economic deprivations were exacerbated by the reestablishment of new hierarchies. The messy and contradictory realities of the developing world were soon laid bare in their confrontation with imposed structures of capitalist modernity. Writings as *Things fall Apart*, *Devil on the Cross*, *The Famished Road*² dissect moments of this rupture with the past.

The term “Neocolonialism” refers to sites where the “hierarchies consigned by the colonial masters are replaced by the native rulers” (Jameson 81). in the

1 George Perry Floyd Jr. (October 14, 1973 – May 25, 2020) was an African-American man who was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during an arrest after a store clerk suspected Floyd may have used a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill, on May 25, 2020.

2 Three seminal novels by the African authors: Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Ben Okri.

words of the Indian Historian Romila Thapar, neocolonialism is the “dressing up of the colonial view” (Thapar 47). For Thapar, after India’s partition, a similar “modern backwardness” shaped the society (Thapar 49). Indian Diaspora¹ writers have sketched homelands from new perspectives. It is fascinating how these forms of writings represent reality through novel artistic frameworks. These writers from non- native English backgrounds appropriated the western realist and modernist literary traditions bringing new shifts in West’s reception of contemporary fiction. Herbert Marcuse’s analysis provides the jargon to understand this phenomenon; he calls it as emergence of “new Optic that replaces the Newtonian Optic” (40). If read closely, these writings report conscious and unconscious commitments of the authors to archive social, economic, and political discontents in the background of the devastating effects of neo-liberal capitalism². In leading diaspora writers from South Asia as Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid (UK-based Pakistani writers), Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, Hanee Kureishi, common thematic concerns allow us to conceive them as “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983).

The remarkable contributions by writers of diaspora expose structures of oppression and exploitation in postcolonial societies owing to the penetration of capitalism and its corollary. Characters living on borders, and in- between spaces navigate through the constricting social and economic realities of existence to bring back a history of capitalism. By highlighting issues of identity, confrontations with racism, experiences of migration, life as a refugee or an exile in the Western metropolitans, these writings bring to the global audiences “the multiple subjectivities that arise in conditions of Diaspora” (Olney 248). Under the umbrella of postcolonial and cultural studies, these writers have circumnavigated exclusion and alienation as direct exilic experiences in the advanced capitalist centers in the Western hemisphere across a global geography that seemingly promises accommodation.

However, as the number of diaspora community of writers expanded an impasse was palpable in the narrowing range and focus of their writings. For instance, the idea of ‘Home’ as a native place seemed to have receded into an imagined one, particularly, for the writers from second and third generation of Diasporic community (Chandrima 88). On a closer inspection, it can hardly be

1 Diaspora is a contested term. or a thorough discussion, see: Redmond, Shana L. “Diaspora.” *Keywords for African American Studies*, edited by Erica R. Edwards et al., vol. 8, NYU Press, New York, 2018, pp. 63–68. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvwrn5v9.16. Accessed 14 June 2020.

2 The terms “neo-liberalism” or “neo-liberal capitalism” refer to the contemporary advanced stage of capitalism.

disputed that these representations of ‘home’ had started to take an ambiguous meaning. This “sense of disjunction” is revealed foremost in the works by Jhumpa Lahiri and V. S. Naipaul where home is conceived as a notion far from material realities (Chandrima 89). Literary depictions deficient in “tendentiousness” are referred to in Morawski’s analysis by way of exhibiting “specific characters in only specific material circumstances” (Morawski 304). In a recent review by the contemporary literary critic and writer, Jahan Ramazani, literary texts profoundly shaped by influences from modern Western literature run into the danger of transcribing capitalism’s history in a monolithic discourse (Ramazani 336). When non-European writers make an attempt to narrate and reconstitute themselves in the larger cultural, intellectual, and institutional communities in which they participate, the differences and inequities are neutralized and thus are often these works have faulted for “eliding peripheral agency.”¹

It is important to emphasize that the paper does not offer any single totalizing outlook on apprehending the history of capitalism in literature. In response to Fredric Jameson’s essay, Aijaz Ahmad’s incisive critique² on Jameson’s use of the terminology “Third-World Literature” draws attention to the problems inherent in strict categorizations. Capitalism produced differentiated expressions and experiences across peripheries one finds that there is neither a homogenized theory nor a single body of text that can grasp the complexity of capitalism. In addition, the complexity is amplified when discussing specific literary works since each writing requires an alignment with its context—the specific geo-spatial history in relation to capitalism. In Ahmad’s view Frederic Jameson’s oversimplifying use of the term “third world literature” implied a “positivist reductionism,”² and drawing further on this argument, one finds that this generalization for defining writings is detrimental to literature from the margins. In this seminal essay Ahmad argues that the significant issues of “social and linguistic formations,” “political and ideological struggles” that shape the peripheries and semi-peripheries cannot be contained within any unified, internally coherent system of knowledge (Ahmad 4).

This necessitates thorough attention to the use of academic jargons as “postcolonial literature” or “Diasporic studies” that do not necessarily comprise of explicit “political” writings (Marx 116). One of the benefits of aforementioned essay by Aijaz Ahmad is its revelation that the fecundity of the real narratives is

1 On Wallerstein’s writings on the history of Capitalism, Anievas & Nişancıoğlu find “a problematic Eurocentrism that elides ‘peripheral agency’.” See, Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, p.16, 2015.

2 Aijaz Ahmad’s a strong counter argument on Frederic Jameson’s essay appeared as “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’.” see, description in works cited.

revealed through works that resist falling back to “general liberal and humanistic universalism” (Ahmad 6). The proliferation of the devastating effects of capitalism rather makes us revisit writings that have historically and concomitantly, in the most authentic sense resisted Anglocentric forms of imperialism. Here the focus on literature from the peripheries of India and Pakistan, particularly the marginal writers and literary writings, show remarkable instances of dissent against capitalist hegemony. These works from the margins of the society attempt towards “the poetics of the oppressed¹” more keenly than the mainstream literature in English. “Multiple, hybrid and heterogeneous³” perspectives in literary works fetch the sedimented history of capitalism is fetched (Brennan 240). Anchored in peripheries of a vast and complex geography, historically known as the Indian Subcontinent, this literature is a product of local regional writers in regional languages. These literary writings bring out parts of social and political lives that could not be subsumed by the homogenizing tendency of the capital. A scattershot description of writings across the two countries, now known as Pakistan and India, highlight moments of resistance against capitalism in varied forms and genres.

It is of key significance to note that class struggles specific to feudalism emerge in folk literature from South-Asia. Rereading folk classics as *Heer*² by Waris Shah and *Shah Jo Risalo*³ by Shah Latif Bittai now available in English translations exhibit subversive trends ; these texts tackle the contested spaces between nationality and ethnicity, vernacular and metropolitan. Pivotal moments in these texts range from descriptions of conflicts between peasants and the feudal landlords to their habitual squeezing of agricultural productivity and imposition of heavy fines on peasant class. “Peasantry” described under “the rubric of premodern and pre-capitalism”, or otherwise misrepresented or silenced in mainstream literature becomes politically significant here (Anievas & Nişancioğlu 34). As forms of collective life are seized from the peasant communalities, these moments in the tales evoke the “primordial crime of capitalism” i.e. land grabbing for privatization. In the theatrical drama performance based on the rendition of the classical folk ‘Heer’, various parts exhibiting dialogue exchange between characters display the

1 The term has been taken from the review published as OAL, A., 1997. The Theatre of the Oppressed. *UNESCO Courier*, 50(11), pp.32-38.

2 The quintessential Classic Punjabi poem *Heer* is named after the central female character called Heer. The Punjabi poet Waris Shah in the eighteenth century built the poem on a Punjabi folk lore, the love story of Heer and her lover, Ranjha.

3 *Shah jo Risalo* Shah Jo Risalo (Sindhi: *ولاسر وج هاش*) is a poetic compendium of famous Sindhi Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai.

antagonism between the rebels resisting feudal oppression and the agents of social and economic control. Frederic Jameson quotes Georg Lukacs succinct remark that often the raw material from “pre-industrialized, agricultural or tribal society the artists” takes up an “immediate meaning” (Jameson 167). On one hand, feudalism has been misconceived as “self-enclosed, self-perpetuating system” not entirely linked to capitalism, thus analyses of these works can be illuminative in sketching connections between feudalism and capitalism (Brennan 165). The commingling of the intellectual, emotional, and social aspects in these texts strongly resonate a sense of rootedness to land and brings to the forefront sentiments of cross-communal bonding.

Enormous heterogeneities are revealed elsewhere through the literatures in various forms and languages that seek freedom from the normative patterns of society. Jasbir Jain notes that the descriptions of the landscape of Sindh, its flora and fauna, conjure a strong sense of belonging to the land, culture and history in Shah Latif Bhitai’s Sindhi classical poem titled *Shah Jo Risalo* (Jain 199). Recent studies have brought out feminist and ecological appraisals of these hundred years old tales spread over in various genres of South Asian regional languages. The literary poetic forms as the *kafis* [lyric songs], the *qissas* [ballads], and folk theatrical renditions called the *rass* [Theatre] were diffused in the rural households of the pre partition India. In contrast to the center seized by the imperial structure of the British, Sufi literature emerged in the peripheries. David Gilmartin validates that these writings from the peripheries posed threat to the British colonial authority. In his words, “Sufi lives in earlier eras” exemplified the ‘permanent ache between center and periphery’ (Gilmartin 162). This is illuminated by the ways in which Sufi poetry is structured. Created on “semantic elements of revolution⁴” the Sufis essentially imagined the poet as a non-conformist or heretic. Anjum Tanvir’s charts how Sufi literature was “more political than spiritual or academic” and as a result was branded as “heterodox” by the British authorities in various localities of the Sub-continent. Various poetic performances expressed strong disparagement of political abuses that include the high-handedness of the rulers (Tanvir 237).

Another significant dimension of Sufi literature’s revolutionary nature is revealed through a body of works titled as Chakkinama [the Grindstone song] and Chakkarnama [the Spinning wheel song]. The Sufi song in Dakkani¹ language in contradiction to the use of Highbrow Persian asserted direct influence on the local rural population. The locals reportedly followed the Sufi tradition of singing in local

1 Daccani/Dakkani (used in both spellings) language has its rootedness in the Indian plateau of Deccan.

vernacular called Dakkani, thus conveying defiance against the British prescription of using Persian as the official literary language in Indian central provinces. It is fascinating that while the dominant theme underlying vernacular oral poetry is devotion to God, the metaphors employed in the mystical-Sufi discourse center around specific material realities i.e., the activities of women and their roles in everyday life (Eaton 89). In this way, folk poetry of Sufi origin penetrated the local households of India where the bulk of this poetry was sung by non-elite women. The forms of the songs include *lorri- nama* [lullaby], *shaadi- nama* [wedding songs], *Suhag-nama* [married woman's song] and it is still sung in remote regions of rural India (Eaton 145). More significantly, these works stand as unique examples of feminist resistance. The contemporary South Asian studies scholar from the Cambridge University, Sara Kazmi, contends that "the incipient feminist voices in these texts do not mimic any western ideology" (Kazmi 2019). Tracing these literatures is much more rewarding, but nonetheless much more challenging.

In a similar vein, the Progressive Writers Union, a cultural front of the Communist party of India (1930's) produced "multi-faceted critique of class structures, familial ideologies, management of bodies and sexualities, idealisms, silences" (Ahmad 21). Before the partition of the Indian Subcontinent into India and Pakistan, Urdu writers as Sajjad Zaheer and Rashid Jahan, published a collection of their writings-nine stories and a play-under the title *Angäre* [Embers] (Weir 132). Other renowned Marxist Indian writers as Yashpal, and Munshi Premchand contributed to the aspirations for a society free from communalism, caste and colonialism in alliance with the former Muslim writers. These literary works of prose addressed the meshed complications introduced by capitalism obliquely termed as "modernization"¹. These writings paved way for fledgling artists, belonging to proletarian working class, and certainly not in restricted terms. Anne Lowry Weir comments on how the legacy of progressive writers, "socialist - realist writers" continue to make its mark on contemporary literature in India and Pakistan inspiring writers to experiment with new forms as surrealism, psychological realism (142).

After colonial departures in many countries, the prevalence of gender, racial and sexual hierarchies got exacerbated by capitalist non-market forms of exploitation and oppression (Anievas & Nişancioğlu, 2015). Marxist writers from both newly formed countries, India and Pakistan, were moved to unveil these coercions in literary works. Later writers continued to experiment with realism

1 Frederic Jameson's work brought to light the significant problems in modernization of the third world, where in their penetration by various stages of capital, cultural struggles reflect the economic problems of such areas, see, Jameson, p.68.

particularly in the shape of short story as the preferred genre. Short stories by writers as Rajinder Singh Bedi deal with routine lives of lower middle-class men and women. For instance the short story “Kalyani” highlights sexual conflicts perpetuated by severe pressure on men as bread earners and women as entirely dependent souls. Most of these stories, the Collection titled as *Our hands have been Chopped Off*, published in 1974, express strong critique of material basis of all human relationships that eventually reduces all human beings to selfishness and apathy. Within the meticulous descriptions of the interiors of a poor middle-class household, the impinging callous ethos of the capitalist system in the newly independent Indian state is implied. Similarly, in another story, “Mythun” [city life] emanates a corrupting influence on the urban dwellers. From 1940-1965, other writers as Saadat Hassan Manto and Krishan Chandar continued to represent art’s commitment to telling the truth. In the same era, Ismat Chughtai, a female iconoclast writer from India, with matchless sarcasm, and devastating irony of the upper class contributed to Urdu literature. Her “controversial” short story “Begum Jan”¹ [the madame] exposes the sexual exploitation of the lower class by the feudal Indian gentry in a remarkable style. Intizar Hussein’s short stories though heavily influenced by James Joyce’s *Dubliners*’ echoes strong resistance towards the bludgeoning industrialization shaping the new Nehruvian India. As a modern realist writer, he blended the Indian and religious myths to depict the social and political changing realities of his times. For instance, “The Yellow Dog” (1962), the very title of his short story is a metaphor for lust and vicious competition in modern society. Mehdi Baqar commends Hussein’s writing for having ‘resurrected’ the short story in the ‘form of fables and folk tales with new multiple meanings’ (Baqar 28). The publication of the English translations of Urdu short stories by Balraj Manra by Penguin publishers in 1974 was another groundbreaking moment. Entitled as ‘The Box of Matches’ exposes the crises of identity and alienation suffered by an individual in a hugely complex capitalist world. As Jussawala notes, in this collection of seven stories “Manra embraces the entire human creed with its diverse complex material, psychological and social issues” (Jussawala 85). More importantly, these works inform on how forms of oppression mobilized by the capitalist mode of production had been intersectional. These are key moments in the history of Indian and Pakistani writings where confrontations and struggles with the birth pangs of capitalism are exposed. However, one cannot lament enough for the obscure status relegated to these works in the history of Urdu literature.

1 After publication of this story, Ismat Chughtai was accused of writing ‘obscene literature’ and had to undergo a legal trial.

Later as Pakistan struggled for the loss of freedom under the ruthless military regime of General Zia ul Haq, leftist intellectuals as Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Habib Jalib were able to draw activists from a wide range of classes, from the working class to the upper-middle factions of society, through revolutionary poetry. Habib Jalib is remembered as “The people’s poet” and remains to this day the quintessential proletarian writer. In Hassan’s view “Habib Jalib’s work signifies struggle for socialism, secularism, and struggle against all forms of oppression” (Hassan 2003). Broadcast of his literary work owing to radical views on military-dictatorship remained banned in Pakistan on National radio or TV until 1988.

In the words of Paul Kumar, Kishwar Naheed and Fehmida Riaz emerged as “highly politicized and self-aware women poets.” Underlying the provocatively titled works as *The body Lacerated*, and *We sinful Women* are themes of resistance against the onslaught of patriarchal domination in Pakistani society (Kumar 88). Fortunately, these writings through translations in English have reached the global audiences and have garnered critical acclaim.

Unlike works in writings, theatrical performances continued only in remnants. Parallel theatre both in post partition India and Pakistan has expressed defiance against capitalist neo-liberal structures. Asis Sengupta and the other contributors in the book titled ‘*Mapping South Asia Through Contemporary Theatre: Essays on the Theatre of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka*’, 2014 publication, provide a summary of the interplay of politics and theatre in five countries in South-Asia¹. Asma Mitra acknowledges the crucial importance of the relatively visible and politically confrontational “parallel theatre⁵” of theatre groups like Ajoka theatre, and Tehrik-e-Niswan [The Women’s movement]. The theatre activity in Pakistan, a country in which theatre as an idea is almost non-existent, delivers “non- hierarchical, and anti-colonialist” messages (Khan 45). In Pakistan, theatre produced “at the margins” is “more popular than theatre produced at the center” (Asis 95). It is important to mention Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal as the primary Marxist dramatists who have shaped the Pakistani Ajoka theatre’s performances. By creating “raw immediacy” theatrical performances deliver familiarity of experience to the audience and concomitantly through subversive messages contribute to being a “liberating force” in societies. The “non-realist, folk-inflected, musical, gestural traditions” incorporated in these performances form another unique feature that has

1 Sengupta explains the use of “South-Asia” as a loosely categorized term for the countries: Pakistan, India, Nepal, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka clarifies Sengupta.

kept the theatre vigor alive in South Asian vernaculars¹ (Asis 104). Indian theatre evolved through “the decentralized, de-Sanskritized, non-Hindi, non-national theatre project” vernacular street theatre. “Radical Dalit performances” brought new understandings of the working of neocolonial policies adopted by the state (Mitra 94). Habib Tahvir’s Naya Theatre Group, and The Bengali Badal Sirkar revived revolutionary theatre and recruited actors in unison activists from all range of classes (Khan 42).

Roughly, around the end of twentieth century, poets as Tara Singh, Nirmal Arpan, Jasbir Singh, Mushtaq Singh and few others, situated theme of love in the context of Punjabi’s oppressed cultural and political position in modern capitalist Indian state. In Herbert Marcuse’s analyses this phenomenon of “De-sublimating art” or “anti-art” produces new aesthetic forms of art and writing (Marcuse 22). Marcuse argues that in these settings, human sensibility rebels against the repressive reason, and is able to invoke “the freeing power of imagination” (Marcuse 30). Drawing from Herbert Marcuse, the study reads how political action inscribed within texts activates aesthetic sensibility in new dimensions. A case in study is the Punjabi Indian poetry that presents a confluence of love poetry and Marxist ideology. Jasbir Singh’s work as *Geet Mera Naheen Kardae* [My songs do not make Any Difference] articulates the poet’s lament for the loss of freedom in his region. Here, symbols from love poetry fuse with the hope for revolution. These “subcultural groups” have been more open to subversive forms of discourse and frequently employ bawdy expressions, local idioms and subversive expressions in poetic works². The Indian Punjabi poet residing in the UK, Mushtaq Singh, brings in reflections on the political and economic turmoil both in the West and their motherland Punjab. Refreshingly new literary styles emerge in Raghbir Singh’s short story collection entitled “Kursi” [The chair]. These short stories³ address subjects as individual alienation from a Marxist point of view. There are unique examples of political novels as *Hanara Hon Taq* [Until the darkness] by Niranjana Tasneem, and Mohinder Singh Sarna’s *Suha Rang Majeeth Da* [The red colour] that foreground Marxist philosophy. These narratives revive history of the development of capitalism across themes of economic frustrations, and the effects

1 Fawzia Afzal Khan validates the use of local Punjabi and Urdu language in Ajoka Theatre’s productions. p.47

2 In a similar vein, Herbert Marcuse refers to the use of obscenities in Black and Hippie art and literary traditions.

3 Particularly, two short stories Cheerian [Sparrows] and Darakht [Tree] explicitly address working class alienation as the primary theme.

of urban migration leading to loss of revolutionary ideals of life in shared living spaces. The younger generation of Punjabi academic scholars have taken to such writings, and have produced works titled as *Poetics of Punjabi poetry*, a scholarly dissertation by Pawan Sameer; another similar feat is the publication of Harbajahn Singh's scholarly work titled as *Pyar te Parivar* [Love and Family] (Singh 165). If provided a global reach, these works will have transformative effect on a large faction of Punjabi speaking and reading audiences across continents.

In Aijaz Ahmad's assessment, as a consequence to "an unbroken parliamentary rule of bourgeoisie since 1947" India has suffered the most miserable form of capitalism (Ahmad 5). The Indian State oppression in the Indian state of occupied Kashmir¹ connotes "necro politics of advanced capitalism". Despite restrictions on all forms of freedom, the discontents and the travails of local Kashmiris have found expressions in the literary writings from Kashmiri authors. Kashmiris have registered strong protest Indian military oppression. Kashmiri folk genres offer ways of expression to the oppressed peasants, and the socialist revolutionary impetus drives these local writers. It is remarkable that the strong socialistic outlook of these writings was not the result of direct indoctrination from Western literature but a natural outcome of a congenial intellectual response (Farooq 721).

One of the key incidents, that started with peasant collective protest of military's persecution of local farmers found its way into literary writing spilling over into daily conversations. The protests, recorded sporadically in Kashmiri literature², found their way into language of ordinary people. Local proverb as 'Bata Bata Te Pyade Pate', meaning the armed soldiery was strictly watching every handful of grain, is commonly used in local folk plays. While the fascist Indian state tried appropriating the local Kashmiri resistant literature under a strong nationalist Indian banner, the people of Kashmir have shown strong resistance. Indigenous scholarship as F. Fayaz's M. Phil. Dissertation titled Kashmiri Society and Culture archives how Kashmiri Folk Literature challenged the project of "National literary Conference" altogether.

In regions that have been locus of ethnic, cultural, political conflicts, literary writings evolve out of conflicts and confrontations with the State. Predominantly, literature from war devastated regions alert us to the violence inhered in practices as

1 Although the state of Kashmir was not directly colonized by the British, the indirect intervention of British colonists created a fascist bureaucratic structure. For more read, Khan, Yasmin. *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Yale University Press: London, 2007.

2 It includes writings from Kashmir's national poet Mehjoor and younger contemporary poets as Abdul Ahad Azad, Arif, Fani and certainly many yet, undiscovered unknown voices.

“just wars”—a phenomenon constitutive in the very ontology of capitalism (Anievas & Nişancioğlu 39) The disenfranchised status of Gilgit-Baltistan in Islamic Republic of Pakistan bears similarity to the political conditions in Indian Kashmir. Similar to Kashmiri poetry, feelings of anger and rebelliousness towards the State of Pakistan resounds in the poetry from Gilgit-Baltistan. Local poets as Shams Zaman, Rehman Josh and other young emerging writers mock at the hypocrisies of the nation state of Pakistan particularly for inciting hatred against the minorities as the Shia Ismailia community in Pakistan. With political convictions that are strongly socialist, these works accentuate revolutionary ideals in the vernacular languages. More importantly, these executions practically reshape the political consciousness of the local people of Gilgit Baltistan. These movements ricochet Herbert Marcuse’s views on art as political movement; he states while “art itself cannot change reality” it can draw “its inspiration and its very form from the prevailing revolutionary movement” (Marcuse 116) . Against the state ideas and practices, the Halqa group comprises of poets who critique on the realities of repression in the state by bringing in examples of revolutionary struggles and wars fought in the region as the one called Gilgit war of Independence, Nov 1st, 1947. An indigenous scholar from the region observes that the communal gatherings under the title ‘Halqa’ took impetus from the lives of other socialist poets and writers as Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and Habib Jalib (Nosheen 227). Against the national high culture of Urdu, English, and Hindi in South Asia, regional literature faces a double bind. Unfortunately, this literature remains inaccessible to wider audiences.

Designated as ‘vulgar languages’, literature in regional dialects is rendered unsuitable for cultural dissemination (Kazmi 32). To bring in the varied depictions of capitalism’s widespread implications, it is imperative to include South Asian regional literatures that have desisted capitalism’s widespread ethos of homogenization.

Conclusion

We live in an age of an advancing capitalist world constructed where invasions, environmental ruin, suppression, state violence, patriarchy and abuse continue unabated. It is but most unfortunate that most of the political, economic, and historical discourses fail to account for social and material inequities, and the global disorder perpetuated through the advancement of capitalism. The paper attempted an overview of non-western forms of active resistance to capitalism through the manifold literary representations in pre partition and post partition Indian and Pakistani literature. In these distinct literary pieces, a new paradigm that

captures the nuanced, complex, and the most horrendous implications of capitalism are represented through the unpredictable patterns of convergences and forms of resistance. Given the limited scope of the study it is not possible to explicate the entirety of peripheral or semi-peripheral literary writings that portray capitalistic undertakings, thus the study only focused on an outline of some key literary forms and movements. However, the argument subsists that this bulk of writings, if translated for a global wider audience, could shape the “world literature” and in consequence, fill the present fissures in western literature .

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