

Interrogating the Appropriation of Spaces of Caste in Pakistan: Ambedkarian Perspective on Progressive Religio-Political Representations in Sindhi Short Stories and in Everyday Politics

Ghulam Hussain

Web of Science ResearcherID: [P-7210-2018](#)

ORCID [0000-0002-9538-1840](#)

Ghulam Hussain is a doctoral fellow at the Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. He can be accessed online at mahesarg@gmail.com.

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to understand the appropriation of spaces of Dalits by Sindhi Progressive activists and short story writers in Pakistan as they construct or rather undermine caste at the anvil of religion and gender to reframe their own religio-political agenda premised on political Sufism or Sufi nationalism. I specifically discuss the narratives emergent of the three popular short stories that are reframed as having exceptional emancipatory potential for the Dalits and (Dalit) women. Assessing the emancipatory limits of Sindhi Progressive narrative, I argue while that the short stories purport to give fuller expression to religious, gender-based and class dimension of the problematic, it elides the problem of casteism and the subsequent existential demand of Dalit emancipation. Given the hegemonic influence of local Ashrafiyya class, the internal caste frictions are glossed over through political Sufism or Sindhi nationalism. This gloss of politicised Sufism hampers Dalit agency and rather facilitates the appropriation of Dalit spaces by Ashrafiyya class. This leads to conclude that the seemingly progressive literary-political narratives framed in religio-political idiom may offer to the oppressed not more than a

token sympathy, compassion, self-pity and false pride in vague history. Instead, they allow the appropriation of spaces and events of the oppressed, and the objectification of oppressed bodies by the oppressor.

Keywords: Casteism, Ashrafiyya-Savarna Patriarchy, Appropriation of Spaces, Hegemony, Progressive Literature, Everyday Politics.

The Introduction

Sindhi¹ society and its rural culture is predominantly Sammat (mostly Muslim) in its values. Sammat is the group of castes that share local political economy with Baloch castes (see Hussain, 2019a; Hussain, 2019b). At the periphery of this Sammat-Baloch nexus (mostly Muslims) live Dalit² communities (mostly Hindus in culture if not in religion). The construction and appropriation of local semi-historical narratives is one of the ways this discriminatory structural imbalance is regulated by Sammat, Baloch and Sayed elite. This Muslim caste elite is generically referred to as Ashrafiyya³, and in case of ‘upper caste’ Hindus as Savarnas. In Sindh,

¹ Sindh is a province of Pakistan having about 47.89 million population (Source: Bureau of Census Pakistan), and is located at 25.8943° N, 68.5247° E coordinates on the world map.

² Also locally known as ‘Darawar’ and Scheduled Castes, there live estimated 2-6 million Dalits. Kolhi, Bheel, Meghwar are three major Dalit castes that live in Sindh (see Hussain, 2019).

³ Ashrafiyya class (i.e. Sayeds or the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and the castes claiming to be of Arab and Central Asian descent. (see Hussain, 2019; Ahmad, 2003; Kazuo, 2004; Buehler, 2012).

the province of Pakistan, the Ashrafiyya elite frames and presents its narrative through Sindhi⁴, the dominant language of the province⁵. The supposedly Progressive section of Ashrafiyya elite frames its ideology in Sufi-nationalist idiom that I call political Sufism, ideology that asserts Hindu-Muslim harmony without necessarily confronting the issue of casteism and Dalit exclusion (see Hussain, 2019a; Hussain, 2019b). Inspired by the international modern progressive movement in politics and literature during the 1950s and 1960s, the Ashrafiyya (also Sindhi Savarna) writers identified themselves as ‘Taraqqi-Passand’ (Progressives) (see Malkani,

⁴ The bulk of the Sindhi literature is published in the form of books, magazines, newspapers. To have an idea of the literature being produced in Sindhi language, see the following online libraries and Publishing houses:

1. Sindhi Salamat. URL: <https://books.sindhsalamat.com/>. (accessed on June 6, 2019)
2. Sindhi Adabi Borad. URL: <http://www.sindhiadabiboard.org/Index.html> (accessed June 6, 2019).
3. Sindhi Language Authority. URL: [http://www.library.sindhila.org/home.\(accessed](http://www.library.sindhila.org/home.(accessed) on June 6, 2019).
4. Roshini Publications. URL: <https://www.roshnipublication.com/>
5. Sindhika Academy. URL: <http://www.sindhika.net/English.htm>. (accessed on June 6, 2019).

⁵ Dalit worldview and their fundamental conceptions of self and society are essentially framed, for instance, in Gujarati or Parakari, Dhatki or Rajasathani and Marvari or Kacchi languages. Therefore, they cannot express their deepest emotions and experiences in Sindhi language which they have adopted as the medium of communication under the ‘hegemonic’ influence of Ashrafiyya-Savarna culture.

1993; Hussain, 1997; Memon, 2002; Siraj, 2009; Paleejo, 2012; Paleejo, 2016; Chandio, 2016). ‘Progressiveness’ is explained by Dr. Ghafoor Memon, a Sindhi literary critic, as ‘an attitude, perspective and the movement that has been there in every era’ such as during the Greek period ‘when Socrates rebelled against the traditions of his time and gave forth a new philosophy, and stood for truth.’ (Memon, 2002, p.279), or when European populace began resisting against feudalism, religiosity and fanaticism during French and October (socialist) revolution, and in process, rationality and scientific thinking symbolic of ‘Progressive’ attitudes, emerged (Memon, 2002, p.279). Irrespective of seemingly egalitarian modernist impulses of the Progressives, the postcolonial religio-political terrain led to the production of literature that undermined the subaltern question of internal colonialism of Dalits by the Ashrafiyya-Savarna classes.

It gradually became evident to me during my fieldwork in 2016 in lower Sindh that Dalit issues were greatly influenced and impressed by the popular literature produced by that Progressive class. It convinced me not only the level of ‘hegemonic’ (see Gramsci, 1971; Hussain, 2019b) influence of Ashrafiyya⁶ -Savarna class over Dalits, but also the epistemic freedom of the Ashrafiyya class to construct the narrative of their choice to relativise Dalit subordination and influence the Dalit’s self-perception. For instance, I observed that when the ‘Dalit’ question was invoked using the ‘Dalit’ and the ‘Scheduled Castes’ identity markers by the Dalit activists, the Sindhi nationalists and most of the contemporary Sindhi progressive writers and their followers attempted to reject Dalit activists’ re-identification and their claims.

⁶ Ashrafiyya class (i.e. Sayeds or the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and the castes claiming to be of Arab and Central Asian descent. (see Hussain, 2019; Ahmad, 2003; Kazuo, 2004).

They discouraged the Dalit activists from problematizing Dalit exclusion beyond a certain threshold.

This neglect or rather the denial of casteism and Dalit exclusion was primarily legitimized through Political Sufism based on Hindu-Muslim harmony as against the two-nation theory of Pakistan based on Hindu-Muslim binaries (see Hussain, 2019a; Hussain, 2019b). Consequently, the Progressives did not consider casteism as the major problem, and did not make Dalit exclusion the subject of political debate or critical enquiry. Notwithstanding that, the Progressives did indulge in Dalit spaces on occasion and particularly when Dalit agency compelled them. In this article, I contend that this occasional intervention into Dalit spaces by the Progressives has been counter-productive for Dalits as it hampers Dalit agency and rather appropriates it. One of the potent ways to counter or legitimize narratives and thus dissipate dissonance is to use literary medium, such as short stories to render the narrative accessible to the common people.. I specifically critique the casteist aspects of the Progressive literary-political terrain as it manifests from the presentation of short stories in everyday politics by the Progressives, by the Ashrafiyya elite and by Dalits to create space for the Dalit. Despite occasional anti-caste and anti-patriarchal narration in a few short stories, the Progressives primarily frame these issues in a manner that makes them correspond with their agenda of ‘political Sufism’ and facilitate the appropriation of the spaces and histories of Dalits. I interrogate this appropriation of Dalit spaces and Dalit identities as it is reflected in those Short stories considered as having emancipatory potential for the Dalits and women. To that end, I discuss three Sindhi short stories as the typical cases of the narrativisation by the Progressives’, who construct and publicize and represent the intersectionality of caste, gender, religion and nation.

To shortlist the stories, I adopted the method of asking some 30 notable Sindhi literary scholars and the Progressive-minded readers to identify the short stories that may help interrogate Sayedism and Dalit exclusion along with the oppression of Dalit women. After a month's exploration assisted by the Dalit activists, I could only gather a few short stories that seemed to explicitly intersect caste along with religion, class and gender. I then analyzed three of them, namely 'Dust of Earth and Stars of Sky' by Amar Jaleel⁷ that related to the oppression of Dalit (women); 'Infidel' by Naseem Kharal that brought into focus the trans-religious dimension of untouchability as it affects the Dalit's decisions to convert to Islam; and Prisoner of 'Karoonjhar'⁸ (Karoonjhar jo Qaidi), a short story written by Ali Baba (1994), which is based on the postcolonial reconstruction of the 18th century anticolonial event related to the supposed bravery of Rooplo Kolhi, a Dalit hero.

I further validate my claims by adding a few but key ethnographic insights to the literary analysis⁹. Weaving my analysis with the narrative of short stories, I discuss certain events when

⁷ Amar Jaleel received Kamal-i-Fun award, which is the highest award in Pakistan in the field of literature. Apart from that he also received Pride of Performance (Pakistan) and Akhil Bharat Sindhi Sahat Sabha National Award of India.

⁸ Karoonjhar is an isolated mountain about 7 kilometers in length at the center of Parkar, the hiding place for the rebels during the British occupation of Tharparkar.

⁹ Informed consent was obtained from all participants. All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical guidelines recommended by the Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. The permission was sought, where required, from the concerned persons to reproduce any picture, graph, table or piece of information.

Ashrafiyya class protagonist or the Progressive intellectual intervened in spaces, events and the narratives of Dalits, when they undermined the demand of Dalit emancipation or when they underestimated the hegemonic impact of Sayedism and Ashrafiyya hegemony.

Theoretical Framework

The Ashrafiyya-Savarna class of feudals, Pirs and Vaniyas (Hindu merchants) ‘imagined’ (Anderson, 1983, p.77) social solidarity essentially on the basis of modern nation that could accommodate their tribal and casteist legacy. The ‘Sindhi nationalist’ narrative (see for instance, Sayed, 1952; Sayed, 1974; Sayed, 2013), promulgated by these classes before and after Partition has grown over the decades through the extensive use of print media, literary circles, and lately through social media to construct the social imaginary that hardly identifies the Ashrafiyya-Savarna elite as the internal oppressor. The local Ambedkarites, however, do not wholeheartedly accept the Progressive’s narrative and complain of its casteist bias. While holding the Progressives and the society and state at large responsible for casteism, racism, and extremist tendencies, local Ambedkarites also criticize their own Dalit community for not ‘reacting against oppression’¹⁰. They urge Dalits to unite by forewarning them that they can succeed in their goal only through their own politically conscious efforts, and that, ‘no other Mahtama, or emancipator, will descend to change their lot, neither did it come in the past, nor it will ever come in the future’ (Bheel, 2017). This Ambedkarian trajectory of thought thus demands the

¹⁰ To have an idea of how local Dalit activists in Sindh connect themselves with the Dalits and Amedkarites in India or elsewhere and problematize politics, culture, society and the literature, read the literature on Dalits in Sindhi written by local Ambedkarites made available by me on Mendely, the online database (see Bheel, 2017; Hussain, 2019c; Hussain, 2019d; Hussain, 2019e).

explicitly self-reflective anti-caste stance from the social critics, academicians and scholars (see Ambedkar, 1944; 2014 (1991); Guru, 1995; Guru, 2000; Ilaiyah, 2010; Guru, 2011a; 2011b; Guru & Sarukai, 2012; Kumar, 2018; Hussain, 2018, Hussain, 2019a; Hussain, 2019b)¹¹.

This way of analyzing casteism from the Ambedkarian perspective (see Kumar, 2016a; Kumar, 2016b) considerably improves upon the existing critical approaches to the sociological and literary-historical (see Behdad, 2011; Damrosch, 2009; Eagleton, 2002). criticism. It differs from the Gandhian critique of ‘untouchable’ treatment of Dalits that was first adopted by Munshi Premchand who wrote short stories both in Hindi and Urdu (See Bushan, 2002). Ghulam Rabbani (2016) writes:

The Harijan lives like dead soul, having accepted all the exploitation and atrocities as their destiny. They might develop a defiant attitude against these injustices but it remains confined to their minds. On the contrary, Ambedkar’s Dalit is audacious, courageous and infused with zeal and zest to fight against exploitation and live with dignity. His rebel doesn’t just imagine being one but steps into the real world.

This critique of literary-political landscape will explain how the hegemony of Ashrafiyya-Savarna classes functions at the empirical level in spaces that otherwise should serve as anti-caste anchor for the Dalit protagonists. It will enable to see if the historical narratives and their fictionalized characters allow Ashrafiyya intrusion in Dalit spaces; and it helps to invoke Dalits to protest against the oppressors, and achieve the egalitarian goal of caste-parity or social inclusion.

¹¹ To have a comprehensive understanding of what I mean by Ambedkarian or Dalitbahujan perspective, read paper draft on ‘Mainstreaming Dalitbahujan perspective in Pakistan’ (2017).

Doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.23455.87200, URL: <https://www.researchgate.net>.

Situating Short Stories in Sindhi Progressive Literature

The Progressives boast of, and probably rightly so, that both in terms of quantity and as the instrument to create political awareness, after Urdu, Sindhi language has the second richest stock of literature in Pakistan (Paleejo, 2016, p.11). This richness to Sindhi literature, however, is not equally harmonized in terms of content and the sociopolitical location of the writers. Since the Sindhi Ashrafiyya-Savarna elite have dominated the literary-political domain for centuries, most of the prominent short story writers, poets and the scribes have hailed from Ashrafiyya castes. Inspired by the Progressive movement that ushered in subcontinent in early 20th century, the Sindhi Ashrafiyya class also evolved its own version of Progressive idiom framed in Political Sufism. Departing from their predecessors, they qualify their Sufism with the modern (Marxist-nationalist and romantic ideas(see Memon, 2002, p.28; Jaleel, 1998; Jaleel, 2007; Shah, 2007a; Shah, 2007b; Jaleel, 2012).

This modernist but religio-political drift also reflects in the short stories whereby they condemn *wadera* culture (feudalism) and Mullah (the superstitious religious cleric). For instance, feudalism is critiqued in stories such as in ‘*Billu Dada*’ and ‘*Kutte jo maut*’ by Ayaz Qadri; ‘*Munh Karo*’ and ‘*Pashoo Pasha*’ by Jamal Abro; ‘*Sheedo Dharel*’ by Ghulam Rabani Agro. Similarly, religious fanaticism and extremism is busted in stories such as, ‘*Maan Insaan Ahiyan*’ (I am human) by Ayaz Qadri, and ‘*Aman Maan School na Wendus*’ (Mom, I won’t go to school) by Hafeez Shaikh (see also Memon, 2002, p 314-15). Notwithstanding the egalitarian import of when it comes to religious and gender-disparities, these stories or the narratives emergent of it do not intersect with the problem of casteism, and rather give an impression that casteism, particularly Dalit exclusion is a normative phenomenon about which agents of social and political change need not to worry about. Take another example of , the story in which

‘upper caste’ Sammat-Baloch protagonist Pishu Pasha is depicted as the socialist revolutionary (see Abro, 2015) as against the local landlord. Pishu Pasha is depicted as the untouchable who dares to drink water in the glass of Raes Gul Khan, the local landlord. While narrating the incident, the writer uses the metaphor of ‘Chuhra’ (Dalit caste) to explain the reaction against Pishu Pasha’s daring act. He writes:

Once, [Pishu] passed by the guest of house Raes Gul Khan. He was dying of thirst. Without caring for consequences, he entered the guest house and grabbed the glass of Raes Gul Khan. All present on the scene tried to stop him, ‘Nope, Nope!; But, by that time this gentleman had drunk two-three glasses of water. Putting down the glass, [Pishu] said ‘Brother why! Did that glass belonged to any Chuhra?’”

(Abro, 2015)

The last sentence ‘Did that glass belonged to any Chuhra?’, clearly shows that while untouchability against Chuhra (Dalits) was/is normative, it is not as such practiced against ‘upper castes’ to which Pishu Pasha belonged. Since Pishu Pasha was not a Chuhra, but an ‘upper caste’ and equal in status to local landlord, therefore, they should not mind his drinking water in the same glass in which landlord drinks. The real thrust of the narrative here is not to bring to light to untouchability against the Chuhra (Dalits), but the class difference within Ashrafiyya castes.

This portrayal of Pishu (upper castes) as the new ‘untouchable, and the projection of socialist confrontation depicted as merely lying between the two protagonists of the privileged castes, one dominating the other, may not be vouchsafed by the Ambedkarites who, first and foremost want to problematize caste-based discrimination and untouchability.

The Progressives have also written a few remarkable short stories that expose the exploitative character of Sayeds. For instance, Jamal Abro's (2015) story '*Shah Jo Pharr*' (Projeny of Shah) first published in 1959 directly confronts Sayedism, in which the discriminatory differentiation between Sayed and *Ummati* (Subject Muslim) is depicted (Abro, 1958, p. 325), and in '*Mau Ji Jholi*' (Lap of Mother) an Ashrafiyya class woman is depicted as embracing a Bhangi (Dalit) child (Abro, 1958, p.326). Similarly, Noorul Huda Shah¹², a Sayed woman herself, has written a few anti-Sayed short stories that indirectly defend the Dalitbahujan right to equal social treatment (Shah, 2007 a; Shah,, 2007b; Memon, 2002). Her short story '*Dozkhi*' also brings to light the racism of Sindhi people against Sheedi caste of the Black African descent (Shah, 2007).

One highly critical short story '*Secrets of Mansion*'¹³ by Manik depicts the nexus between patriarchy and Sayedism. In it, the writer shows how strict caste endogamy and patriarchy prevalent in Sayed families creates conditions of celibacy for women and sexual relations outside of wedlock. A Progressive activist told that Manik was abused, ridiculed and

¹² Noorul Huda Shah is one of the most celebrated Sindhi short story writer, Pakistani playwright and former caretaker provincial minister of Sindh Government in 2013. See:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/799025> (accessed June 6, 2019).

To have an idea of Noorul Huda Shah's literary-political approach read her statements related to the literary production during General Zia's regime, the period during which she wrote several drama serials for state-sponsored TV channel PTV. Further read in DAWN, URL:

<https://images.dawn.com/news/1178036>. (accessed June 7, 2019).

¹³ See "Haveli JaaRaaz, (1967) first published in Sindhi digest 'Shuni'.

even socially boycotted to the limits to eventually commit suicide¹⁴. Some of the leading Sindhi Progressive writers vehemently criticized him for his exposition of patriarchy embedded in Sayedism. Shaukat Shoro, a Progressive short story writer opined that, ‘Manik is merciless, murdering and oppressive writer. Amongst the comity of Sindhi writers, he stands apart and alone, to whom the most privileged Sindhi literary writers do not accept, while the readers, after having avidly read, begin abusing him’ (Manik, 1992). This shows the level of the critique that Manik had mounted, and because of which he was deliberately alienated from the mainstream Progressive circles as he did not even explicitly subscribed to Sufi nationalist narrative and delved in existentialism.

Notwithstanding her extraordinary self-critical and anti-Sayed stance and the feminist inclinations, these selective Progressive writers do not draw the clear line between the level of exploitation and humiliation of the Sayed women and the Dalit women, or the Dalit Sindhi and Savarna Hindu. In fact, the Progressives applied their own standards of gender (dis)parity when it served their purpose. For instance, the two stories ‘*Mubarakhoon*’ and ‘*Sagar Je Laharun Te*’ that show Sindhi women rebelling against patriarchy and the forced marriage, are not held in good light by the Progressives such as Rasool Bux Paleejo who considers it the prime illustrations of ‘negative’ rebellion (see Memon, 2002, p.319). Moreover, the scathing criticism that a few of these anti-Sayed Ashrafiyya class writers faced is also an indicator of the lack of ‘shared space’ for the Dalit intellectuals (mostly identified as Hindus as well) to expose

¹⁴ Manik’s wife, however, maintains that Manik died of heart attack. Some of Manik’s close friends argue that although Manik was bitterly criticized for his writings, particular for his purportedly ‘sexually explicit’ depiction of patriarchal social reality and Sayedism, his circumstance of death has not much to do with it.

Sayedism. Hence, although their ideological and discursive trajectory was highly critical from the Ashrafiyya egalitarian or the Sufi nationalist perspective, it did not seem to qualify for the wholehearted approval by the Dalit-feminist intellectuals and or the Ambedkarites (see for instance, Guru, 1995; Lata, 2015; Kundu, 2017; Sripathi, 2017; Velaskar, 2012; Margaret, 2012). In the sections that follow, I would further explain through Ambedkarian perspective, the excerpts from these popular short stories by Amar Jaleel, Naseem Kharal as regards how they (mis)fit as the anti-caste and anti-patriarchal Progressives.

The Reframing of ‘Infidel’ to uphold Interfaith Harmony

‘Kafir’ (infidel), a short story written in 1960s by Naseem Kharal, the Ashrafiyya class feudal, furnishes one of the exceptionally counterintuitive anti-caste narratives. The patriarchal import of the ‘Infidel’ is ignored, and often presented by the Progressives as the explanation of both the religious and caste discrimination and untouchability that pervades across religions in Sindhi society, and to prove that Sufi nationalist path is the most appropriate one for the (Hindu) Dalits to mutually coexist in the predominantly Muslim Sindh. Before, further elaborating upon it, I quote from the story a dialogue between a supposedly Hindu Dalit convert to Islam and a Mukhi (a community head):

Mukhi, the panchayat headman of Oad [Dalit] community begged in the name of holy Gita and even threw his turban at Seetal's feet, but Seetal just didn't care much and replied:

"Mukhi! Do whatever you like, but I shall change my religion.

Mukhi: "But why after all you want to change your religion?

Seetal: My choice, my wish simply.

Mukhi: Even then?

Seetal: I just don't like my religion. That's it.

Mukhi: Alas! Why on earth don't you like your religion?

Seetal: Alright Mukhi. Tell me, who are we?

Mukhi: We are Hindus.

Seetal: Why then Hindus cremate the dead, whereas we bury them?

Mukhi: It's our ritual.

Seetal: Alright. Why do we eat goat after butchering it (like Muslims)?

Mukhi: This too is our ritual—since the times of old ancestors.

Seetal: But these are the rituals of Muslims?

Mukhi: These are theirs. But ours too!!

Seetal: Then how can you say, we are Hindus?

Mukhi: Then what the heck are we, crank?

Seetal: Half Hindus-half Muslim. (We have) body of sheep, head of goat."

(Excerpt translated from *Kafir*, a short story by Naseem Kharal¹⁵)

In this conversation, Seetal stands accused before the Oad (Dalit) community of betraying communal norms to convert to Islam, and proclaim that the Hindu religion is based on falsity. Although infuriated, members of the Oad 'panchayat' (caste council) were not very harsh at Seetal, as they believed that Seetal had been bewitched by a Mullah (Islamic cleric). They tried to convince Seetal that he had made a blunder, but Seetal remained adamant that he was happy

¹⁵ Source: 'Naseem Kharal Joon Kahariyoon' (2007), a compilation of short stories in Sindhi language by Danish Nawaz. Roshini Publications, Kandiaro. URL: www.sindhsalamat.com. This story was written in 60s by Naseem Kharal, the renowned upper caste landlord (wadero), and one of the leading Sindhi progressive writers of the 60s and 70s.

with his conversion. Having seen his resolve Mukhi made the final attempt to convince Seetal saying, 'Remember Seetal! No matter how lavishly you harness donkeys like horses, they will remain donkeys, and never become horses.' (i.e. no matter how good a Muslim you become, you will remain untouchable in their eyes).

Seetal's adventure eventually ends up with his realization that in case his ailing wife (who had also converted along with him) dies, he cannot be given woman for marriage from Muslim castes, simply because he was considered as 'lower caste' or 'untouchable'. Ultimately, Seetal converts back to his former faith. The story, thus, ends with the bigoted disappointment of the Molvi (religious) at the re-conversion of Seetal, who says the 'Infidel is after all infidel'. Hence, from this narrative, it becomes evident that the writer of story conveys the social fact that although Mullah (religious cleric) primarily expresses his social imaginary through religious binaries, yet caste comes into the foreground when it comes to actual relations. Unlike a Mullah, Hindu Dalit community is presented as more realistic as they imagine caste and religion as embedded in each other. They are presented as cognizant of the fact that they even cannot marry into Shaikhs (converts from Savarnas). But what if Muslim Oad families also existed as do Shaikhs converts from Bheels, and Baghri Muslim families? The story/narrative does not help understand the consequences of the voluntary conversions in such cases.

Hence, although at the generic level, the story brings out very sharply that caste discrimination is a trans-religious phenomenon, and even stronger than religious affiliations, yet the progressives try to bring into focus its religious dimension more than the caste-related. .Rita Kothari (2009), a Sindhi (Savarna) based in Ahmedabad in India has translated 'Infidel' from Sindhi into English, and has discussed primarily to show that such stories were the product of nostalgia of business class (Jati) Hindus and the post-Partition redemption of Sindhi Muslims

who desired to reclaim their imagined syncretism that supposedly existed before Partition between Sindhi Hindus (mostly Savarnas) and Sindhi Muslims (see, Kothari, 2009)¹⁶. With her emphasis on Sufi identity of Sindh¹⁷, Kothari, however, does not shed much light on the anti-caste dimension of the story and rather treats both religion and caste as being equally implicated¹⁸. In this particular case, deviating from the Progressive's typical stance, Dr. Ghafoor Memon, however, argues that major import of the story is to show that cultural and class/caste-based norms are stronger than religion. He argues that Muslims are proved to be hypocrites as on the one hand they believe that there is no discrimination in Islam based on caste; while on the

¹⁶ Rita Kothari (2009) has translated from Sindhi into English some 22 short stories mostly written by Sindhi nationalist writers, mostly (Jati) Hindus or Savarna Sindhis (living in India or in diaspora) and Ashrafiyya Muslim Progressives living Sindh.

¹⁷ Unlike her writings on Indian society and culture, which are quite critical of casteism and Dalit oppression (see for instance, her article on 'Short Story in Gujarati Dalit Literature' (2001), Kothari frames the society of Sindh primarily from Sindhi Savarna-Ashrafiyya lens. See also her blog post 'Of Men, Women, Caste and Cinema' at <https://kafila.online>, in which she assuming the feminist standpoint problematizes the misogyny of the producer while criticizing the deliberate absence of caste in Hindu cinema and the pretension 'that the upper-caste characters are casteless.'

¹⁸ Listen her lecture online, 18 | Prof. Rita Kothari | Sufism in Sindh | 18 April, (Aug 28, 2017) published by IIT Gandhinagar. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0sg_F6bZW0. (accessed September 8, 2019).

other hand they continue to discriminate as do the Hindus (Memon, 2002. p.345). Rasool Bux Paleejo, a leading Marxist-nationalist also affirmed the factual relevance of the story:

One the one hand we surpass all limits of exaggeration and slogan mongering to prove that there is not caste system in Islam and on the other, in reality, we are the leading custodians of the system of untouchability and casteism. Rasool Bux Paleejo in Memon, 2002, p.346)

The recognition of casteism, however, does not bar the Progressives to resort to Marxist and nationalist explanations as an antidote to it. The moral of the story that is often upheld by them emphasizes ‘interfaith harmony’ instead of patriarchy and casteism that is embedded under the gloss of religion. As Memon argues, this story ‘Infidel’ supports the argument of the communists that social equality (devoid of casteism) can be achieved through socialist change or through communism, and that would eventually eradicate casteism and untouchability (Memon, 2002, p.346). In this manner, this conventional Marxist-nationalist approach relegates the problems of casteism and untouchability to the second order issues supposed to vanish away once communism would prevail.

‘Infidel’ is also presented as the explanation of caste discrimination by the Muslims against the Hindus in general to convince the Dalits that conversion cannot bear the requisite benefits. For instance, motivated by Taj Joyo (the Ashrafiyya Sindhi nationalist activist and the writer), who projected that story¹⁹ to prove that the recurrent abortive attempts at conversion to

¹⁹ See online blog written by Sufi Ghulam Hussain (me) on December 9, 2017 titled [Why Dalits in Pakistan are reluctant to convert to Islam en masse!](http://roundtableindia.co.in/) URL: <http://roundtableindia.co.in/>. (accessed on March 19, 2019)

get rid of 'untouchability' and religious discrimination do not work. Taj Joyo, for instance, wrote in Hemandas Chandani's (Scheduled Caste activist and poet) book²⁰:

I remember for sure that it was the night of December 11, 1977, when I met at Hemandas' home. I had a chit chat with Kanji Mal (officer national bank), Ganesh Balani, Bhani Mal, Sarvan Kumar, Naraern and Heman [all Dalits of Meghwar caste]. If I remember correctly, either Ganesh Mal (or any of the friends present) put up a proposal that 'we Meghwar are considered as lower-class Hindus, by caste Hindus. Therefore, our survival lies in converting to Islam'. There, I opposed that thinking that it is not the solution, because caste-based class discrimination also exists among Muslims. No Sayed Muslim will allow marry his daughter into any other caste, not to mention of Machi Muslim (fisherman caste considered the lower among Muslims). Although the days have much changed now, but even then, I narrated them the fiction story (based on social reality of casteism among Muslims) of Naseem Kharal.

Finally, we came to a consensus that the solution of social discriminations lies in 'education and only education'. Today I feel proud that it is the effect of my ideas and the fiction story of Naseem Kharal narrated by me, that Ganesh Balani's four daughters have now reached the highest educational achievement: Shabnam Rathore made Sindh famous by doing PhD from Germany in 'Underground Saline Water'. Another Pushpa Kumari has done M.Sc. from Agricultural University Tando Jam. Third daughter Nimrita, is a lecturer in Sindh University's

²⁰ The book by Heman Das Chandani titled *Humerche Hoongar* (Sindhi) was published in 2017.

microbiology department. Fourth Sushhama Devi who did M.Sc from botany and serving as lecturer in Karachi".

(Taj Joyo, Preface to Hemanda Chandani's *Humerche Hoongar*, pg. 12)

As it is evident, Taj Joyo suggested the Dalits to get Sindhised without conversion. He tried to convince them that there was caste discrimination and untouchability even among Muslims. This suggestion was in line with the Sindhi nationalist ideology that desired unity between Hindus and Muslims, and that did not offer the political way out of the caste discrimination and untouchability. The best of the solutions that Joyo proffered to these structural and political issues was the uplift through educational achievement at individual level. Dalit activists seemed to take the suggestion of Joyo, as they began to discourage conversions.

Like Joyo did, the Progressives have convinced many Hindu Dalits not to convert and express their fidelity with the Muslim dominated and Ashrafiyya-led Sindh through the Sufi nationalist medium. This has rather led Dalits to get ashrafised or adopt certain norms of dominant Muslims that reflected in their expressed reverence for Sayeds, Pirs and Sufis. This form of ritual inversion to adopt Ashrafiyya values without conversion, however, does not seem to resolve the fundamental problem either, that is, caste discrimination and untouchability. Resultantly 'dissonance' (Festinger, 1962; Hussain, 2019) persists between the assumption of being Sufi Sindhies and the empirically existing caste based discriminatory practices (see Hussain, 2019b). Moreover, contrary to the claims of Progressives, the Ashrafiyya intervention into Dalit spaces of decision-making and identity (re)formation proves the persistence of hegemonic influence of Ashrafiyya elite. This, I argue, tantamount to the appropriation of Dalit's epistemic space as it disallows and discourages Dalit activists to come up with their own alternative counter-hegemonic narratives (see Guru, 2011a).

There are, however, very few among Dalit activists, particularly the Ambedkarites, that radically depart from Sufi-nationalist trajectory. Consciousness of being sandwiched in between Brahminic and Ashrafiyya hegemons, these Ambedkarites have turned into crypto-Buddhists, that is, while politically they tend to follow B.R.Ambedkar and cherish Buddhist practices, but also loosely adhere to the normatively sanctioned Hindu and Ashrafiyya practices. These varied approaches to live a dignified life, however does not bar a common Dalit to try out conversion to Islam, Christianity or Ahmedia sect/religion. Generally, at the level of society, the voluntary conversions of Dalit families, particularly the poorest and the most vulnerable ones, continues unabated, and often go unnoticed (See Wajid, 2017; CIFORB, 2018). This proves that while Progressive's politically motivated narratives may influence Dalit activists, particularly the Dalit middle class not to convert, such as through the specific rendition of short story 'Infidel', the poorest or the ultra-subaltern castes or sub castes and the most vulnerable Dalit families may often see conversion as an open option.

Invoking Self-pity in 'Dust of Earth and Stars of Sky'

The short story 'Dust of Earth and Stars of Sky' (*Dharti ji Dhoor, Asman jaa Taara*) by Amar Jaleel arouses the compassion for Bali, a Bheel (Dalit) woman who had been seduced and raped by Shahu, a Sayed patriarch. Although, the story seems to be highly critical of Sayedism, which is a rare theme in Sindhi literary domain, it does not sufficiently invoke Dalits to resist against it. The reasons for this epistemic and ontic lopsidedness can be partly attributed to the politico-ideological predilections of the writer, and the targeted Progressive audience receptive to Sufi-nationalist narrative. To give the reader an idea of the ideological lens of the writer, I am quoting below the translation of selective sections of the story.

[Depicts the beauty and social vulnerability of a Hindu Dalit woman]

The emotions of the youthful age cannot be controlled by the systems of caste or religion.

The people of Rohri town could not escape the gorgeous youthful spark of Bali. Her startling beautiful body could barely be hid under her tattered clothes (pg. 68-69).

[A dialogue between Shahu and Bali]

‘And Sisters? [‘What did they do?’ asked Shahu]

‘They were harlots’ (p74)

[...]

‘The eldest eloped with a Punjabi rascal...and he engaged her in prostitution’

‘The younger one eloped with a Baloch to Shikarpur’....’A few days later there was corpse of my sister lying on the river bank’. (p.75)

[Depicts people’s belief in Sayedism...Two aged school teacher in a dialogue with Shahu]

‘Junior Shah! Hope you are fine’ [Teachers greeted Shahu while he having whisky]

‘Fine, need your prayers’ Shahu replied coldly.

‘Why are you making we *ummatis*[subjects of yours] sinner’. One of the teachers even pleaded before him, saying, ‘We solely rely on you for our wellbeing here and in the hereafter’.

Shahu remained utterly disinterested towards teacher’s pleadings. (p. 80)

[Shahu seducing drunken Bali]

[Bali] ‘I am not even a Muslim’

[Shahu], ‘I am Sayed, who truly deserves to be in paradise’. He dragged her to herself,

‘In Islam the greatest of bounty is to convert any non-Muslim to Islam. I will make you Muslim’.

... ‘I will marry you and teach you how to behave in Ashrafiyya family’ ... ‘Leave knitting nets.’

...Bali gradually slid her face on the breast of Shahu, and said ‘I will leave knitting nets’.
(p.84-85)

[Sayedism reflects when Shahu does not accept Bali and the child girl begotten of him]

[Shahu’s friend Siraj] ‘Uncountable children of the Ashrafiyya are begotten and brought up this way among the Bheel’. Siraj tried to console Shahu, ‘Why do you worry so much’.

‘I am Sayed Siraj’ Shahu rebutted in hard accent. (p.88)

‘Humiliation terrifies the honorable. Not to the worthless Bheel women who does not know about what dignity is’. (p.89)

[Shahu’ yells at Bali]

‘You, the despicable, lower caste, you are a worthless Bheel’. Shahu grabbed her from her plait and said, ‘and do you know, I am Sayed, Sayed am I’. (p.93)

‘We do not even let our *ummatis* [Muslim subjects] to get so close to us, and this infidel Bheel dreams of marrying a Sayed’. (p.94)

[Shahu goes to kill Bali’s newborn child daughter]

He was consoling himself that he was killing a newborn daughter in the name of God, to save a Sayed child from wandering among the Bheels. In the afterlife, God will give him his due reward. In case it did not happen as planned, then at least he had that genealogical capital of being Sayed to intercede before God. (p.101)

(Jameel, 1998, 68-103)

The story depicts tragic socioeconomic vulnerability of Dalit women due to which they are often raped by Ashrafiyya men. The writer enters into the minds of both the oppressor and the oppressed and brings out the casteist arrogance of the Sayed, and the haplessness and humiliation of the Dalit woman. In a highly pro-Sayed society in which even the Progressive writers are reluctant to speak against Sayeds, the writer has shown a great dare to impute Sayeds, the risk that no Dalit intellectual can afford to take. Dr. Ghafoor Memon writes in his review of the story:

There is a specific nature of the honor and the respect of Sayeds in Sindh, whereby people confer upon them the status of Murshid (spiritual leaders), and consider them as the continuation of Prophet Muhammad's progeny, and to themselves as '*ummatis*' (social subjects of Sayeds) thus assigning themselves lower status. No doubt, the respect for Sayeds in its own way is justified, but there have been Sayeds in history who has taken an undue advantage of that status. After the coming of modern progressive wave, the thinking has evolved not to discriminate on the caste and race.

(Memon, 2002, p. 259)

The Ambedkarites may not accept that apology and the conferring of credit to Ashrafiyya-laden Progressive class, and may raise certain fundamental concerns. They may acknowledge that although the story has considerable emancipatory value, yet may contend that the writer does not suggest any escape for the Dalits out of that situation thereby leaving them in the depressed state. Hence, it fails to invoke agitation against the structural violence meted out to Dalit women and infuse the spirit of resistance against Sayedism. For instance, Bali, as a Dali woman, is shown to give birth to the child, but her psychological strength is not depicted as to surpass the social and political prowess of his Sayed seducer. Fearing that her child could be killed by the Sayed(s), she

even hides the act of seduction and the fact that Sayed was a father of her child. Although this exemplifies the caste-based and religion-based structural violence of high order and the counter-resistance by the individual Dalit woman, the Ambedkarites may have liked to take it further into the collective domain of resistance to enthuse the spirit of collective resistance. Hence, the story ends up abruptly leaving the Ashrafiyya reader in a state of compassion for Dalits, and to Dalits in a state of self-pity.

Although in many other short stories and public statements, Amar Jaleel certainly seems to stand against Sayeds and Pirs in so far as his own caste privilege (dis)allows him to be, yet the frequency and the number of such stories that depict Dalit oppression in relation to Sayedism is comparatively very low. This story, therefore, is the only one of its kind written by him that projects Dalit-women's oppression, but that too does not takes the reader towards Dalit emancipation and social protest deemed necessary by the Dalit activists (see Ramachandran, 2004). This fact then complicates the writer's personal life at the level of commitment to eradicate caste discrimination or to emancipate Dalits. Playing the role of the Dalit liberator, Amar Jaleel, in fact, defines the Ashrafiyya definition of 'Dalit women's oppression. Colored in Sufi nationalist ideology of interfaith harmony, Jaleel condescends to take Sayed Patriarchy and misogyny to the task that does not help invoke Dalit women's emancipation as the Dalit women's depiction of her naivety and sexual vulnerability to Ashrafiyya patriarchy are not sufficiently counterpoised with the Dalits or Dalit women's agency to strive for emancipation. Resultantly, the Ashrafiyya reader of the story instead feeling remorse or shame on his or her patriarchy is led to enjoy the Dalit woman's sexuality and body.

Hence, it can be safely assumed that the story does not specifically takes the anti-caste stance and wavers in its emphasis on Hindu-Muslim, Sayed-non-Sayed, Dalit-Sayed, women-

men binaries. It, thus, casts the ambiguous and rather counterproductive impact on the public opinion as regards the nature and the level of religious and caste-based persecution. The sociopolitical consequences of this ambiguity can even be seen on the Sufi nationalists as well as on the Dalits impressed by the narrative offered by Amar Jaleel or the Progressives. For instance, Dalit activists were found to be carried away by the Savarna-Ashrafiyya narrative of ‘forced conversion’²¹ of Hindu and Dalit girls or women.

Despite the fact that most of such marriages and conversions are consensual, Dalit and Hindu girls were depicted as Marvis of Sindh under the bondage of Umar, a mythologized Savarna/Ashrafiyya king of the yore who had kidnapped Marvi, a Dalit girl²². This re-framing of the folk narratives serves as the hegemonic instrument to reduce seduction, rape, consensual sex or marriage-based conversion to a single libelous denominator of ‘forced conversion’, the religious connotation that is in line not only with Sufi nationalist ideology but also acceptable

²¹ The cry against Forced Conversions in Pakistan raised by the Savarna-Ashrafiyya Sindhi nationalists and the Christian elite in July 2019 made to the Congress of the United States. See: The Pioneer (July 21, 2019) 10 US Congressmen ask Trump to raise issue of Sindh with Pak PM Imran. URL: <https://www.dailypioneer.com>. (accessed June 9 2019).

See also India Today (July 22, 2019) URL: <https://www.indiatoday.in>. (accessed June 9 2019).

²² The reinvigorated literary assertion of Sindhi nationalists during the 1950s that reframed the narrative of Marvi was also noticed by Levesque and Camille Bui (2014) in their cinematographic study of first Sindhi movie ‘Umar-Marvi’ made in 1956. They argued that the movie ‘contributed to the construction of a modern national imaginary for Sindhis in post-Partition Pakistan’ (see Levesque et al, p.119-121).

problem identifier for the protagonists of Political Islam and Hindutva ideology. Hence, in this manner, these narratives of force, coercion, seduction and rape derived from the folktales and re-framed by the Progressives in Sufi nationalist idiom are conveniently and uncritically grafted upon Dalit women's vulnerability. This re-framing of vulnerability in Sufi-nationalist idiom hides both the casteist and patriarchal bias of Savarna-Ashrafiyya Progressives and the hegemonic class to which they primarily represent.

‘The Prisoner of Karoonjhar’ and the Appropriation of Dalit Heroes and Spaces

The inversion of the history of a Dalit rebel/ fighter is exemplified in ‘The Prisoner of Karoonjhar’²³ (Karoonjhar jo Qaidi), a short story written by Ali Baba (Rind Baloch by caste). In this story, Rooplo Kolhi is depicted as the hero of Sindh who fought bravely during the middle of the 19th century when the British attempted to establish its writ over Parkar, a small mountainous region surrounded by Rann of Katch on the south and Thar Desert of Sindh on the North (see Figure 1 painted by a Kolhi for book on Rooplo Kolhi). Rooplo Kolhi, as the locals believe, was a *Girasia*, that is, the tribal chief recognized as such by rulers of the time, particularly by the Mughals (see Mal, 2000; Kolhi V., 2011; Kolhi B. M., 2014). Although the narrative depicted in Ali Baba's (1994) story is not much different than most of the Kolhis and Sindhi people believe in, yet it gets problematic when Dalit activists undermine its pro-Savarna history and let the Ashrafiyya elite to appropriate their agency. Hence, it has both the emancipatory as well as hegemonic and counter-hegemonic aspects depending upon who patronises whom.

²³ Karoonjhar is an isolated mountain about 7 kilometers in length at the center of Parkar, the hiding place for the rebels during the British occupation of Tharparkar.



Figure 1: The painting by Poonja Ram Kolhi, first appeared Paru Mal's (2000) book Lok Sagar Ja Moti. It was popularized by Parkari Kolhis depicting Rooplo Kolhi along with his rebel friends attacking the British in Karoonjhar Mountains at Parkar, (Source: Parkari Audio-Visual Project, PCDP)

Ali Baba's (1994) narrative of Rooplo's bravery portrays Rooplo as if in direct confrontation with the British, and it goes like this:

As if the British canons were roaring. [...] As if hearts of Samma, Soadha, Soomra, Thakur, Rabari and Kolhi women were being ripped asunder. [...] Rano, Tkhakur, Khoso, Rathore, Samon, Soomro, Parmar and Kohli all had sacrificed their lives for the sake of Karoonjhar (pg.14).

[...]

[The battle was not over yet] the English would trigger the canons because Ranas [Sodha Thakur rulers of Parkar] has not given up yet. Thousands of Kolhi, Bheel, Rathore, Samma and Khosa were roaming secretly in the valleys of Karoonjhar Mountain (p.14-15)

[...]

No sooner did that night fall, Kolhis would began attacking the pickets of the British army.[...] The British did not confront such kind of rebellion in any other part of the Hindustan [...]. When captain Tyrwhitt received an indictment from Sir Charles Napier, he simply sent a reply, 'I regret. Here we are not fighting with the people but with the terrifying volcanic mountain'. The poor captain Trywhitt felt himself at his wits ends. He was unable to devise any way to control Ranas (Sodha Thakurs) and Kolhis (p.g 15). [...]

[Compares Rooplo Kolhi with Hindu Vedic Gods]

That Kolhi was tall and dark brown like the Shri Kirshan Mahrarj of Hindu sacred books, and as resolved and steadfast as Arjun Maharaj (p. 15)

[The British new that whom they were fighting with]

'Roopa [Rooplo Kolhi] we do not want to kill you. You just simply tell us the whereabouts of Ladhoo Singh and his accomplices. We will confer upon you the fief as per your desire'.

[The writer begins reframing Rooplo as the self-motivated fighter who damn cares about Ladhoo Singh]

'This whole land is mine. Who the hell are you to give that back as a fief to me?'

'Were you not a slave of Rana Ladhoo Singh?'

'No, I would have shoot Ladhoo Singh, if I had felt that I were a slave of him' (p.19).

[Rooplo's wife is depicted as steeped in patriotism]

'Roopa, I have come to see you the last time. Never ever make me the object of ridicule before Kolhi women. Never give up. Otherwise, I shall abandon you. Moving her hand

over the pregnant belly I shall proclaim that this child is not begotten of Rooplo, but of someone else' (p.17)

[Writer dilutes caste disparities by showing that Meghwars were anti-national and assisted the British]

'They were Ladhoo Singh and Rooplo, from whom you had escaped to seek refuge under the tannery of Meghwars' [p.18]

[Ends the story by showing the colonialist minds as psychologically disappointed after Rooplo's resistance]

For the first time, Trywhitt felt that no alien nation can occupy the lands of foreign nation for more than 25 years, but they might be compelled to vacate Karoonjhar probably even before 12 years.

As it is evident from the above excerpts of the story, Rooplo Kolhi is depicted as the independent freedom fighter who fought against the British to reclaim his '*Mulk*' (Parkar). The impression is created that Parkar was a part of Sindh and Rooplo, therefore, fought for Sindh. Karoonjhar symbolizes Sindh in miniature and the local castes symbolized the Sindhi nation that was resisting against the British. In a latest 'progressive' compilation of essays in Sindhi, Rooplo Kolhi's confrontation with the British is represented not just as fidelity to the local 'upper caste' rulers but to nation. For instance, equating tribal ethic to stand by the side of the local ruler with the national patriotism, Dr. Azad writes:

By having a look on the overall scenario during that period, it becomes evident that it was the period during which to remain loyal to the local ruler under the given tribal system was considered as loyalty to the nation. By and large the same kind of struggles can be evidenced during Mughal era against British. (Qazi, 2015, p.11)

This nationalist reframing, that legitimizes the subordination of the oppressed castes to the local oppressor castes for the sake of freedom from or resistance to the external forces (the British), undermines the agency of the Dalits both in the historical past as well as in the present by suggesting Dalits to play second fiddle as loyal subordinates to the Ashrafiyya-Savarna castes. In contemporary Sindh, where these caste-based or the tribal relations of domination and subordination still exist with some minor variations though, this nationalist logic that has re-identified Pakistani establishment or Punjabi domination as the new ‘other, in a way, allows the subordination of Kolhis or Dalits to Sodha Thakurs, Khosas, Mir Talpurs and even to Sayeds. Hence, this tribal-nationalist ethic even applies today, and may continue to be applied by the Ashrafiyya-Savarna castes on excuse of the external threats to the internal tribal-caste (dis)harmony.

Prior to that appropriation of Rooplo Kolhi by the Sindhi nationalists, it was almost vice versa. The review of the vernacular literature written by Parkari Kolhis, and the conversations held by me with the local Parkaris in 2019 indicate that Parkaris did not always imagine Parkar as the part of Sindh. A Tharparkar based Dalit activist inverted the nationalist narrative in the following manner:

Mado Meghwar, who gave refuge to *Trawat* [Tyrwhitt²⁴] . Do you know why he gave refuge to *tarawat*? Very few know. You must see, during that period, the poor classes...in 1800s.the first Dalit woman who wrote a letter...she only was class VIII pass. She was ...Savatri Bai Phule....she writes that they were the English people who came in and freed us from clutches of the upper castes. They see the coming of the British as the

²⁴ Trywhitt was a British appointed captain and administrator at Parkar and was assigned the task to subdue Sodha Thakurs.

precursor of emancipation. They supported the British during the 1857 war, the Sikhs allied with the British to get rid of Mughal persecution. Similarly, Meghwar like Madhu, and the people of Parkar, particularly Dalits, sided with the British as the emancipators who got them rid of the domination of Sodha Thakurs. And this [Rooplo], who was the paid mercenary of Sodha Thakurs, is now reckoned as the hero in history. But those like Madhoo Meghwar who supported the British to get rid of Sodhas persecutors are condemned as the rebels.

Like Dalits themselves, this counter narrative is also very marginal and very few even among Dalit activists subscribe to an essentially Ambedkarian perspective on history and historiography. Yet there are many points on which they converge and that deviate from the Ashrafiyya-dominated nationalist narrative. Before the Partition of the subcontinent, Parkar was imagined by Kolhis as well as by other Parkari communities as '*Mulk*' (literally, a country different from Sindh) (Mal, 2000; Kolhi V., 2011; Kolhi B. M., 2014). This social imaginary often sometimes reflects in the political claims of ownership of Parkar made by Kolhi activists (see for instance, pamphlet in Figure 2, of local Kolhi leader which in reads 'Parkar is not the private property of anybody, but our fatherland').



Figure 2: Local Government elections (2013) pamphlet of Veerji Kolhi . Source: Author (2016)

Given the historical profile of the characters, which is very vague though, this story by Ali Baba (1994) cannot be interpreted like the other two discussed above that are essentially based on fictitious characters. In this story history is inflated through fiction; while in the previous stories, fiction is created to depict contemporary social reality. Hence, the characterization of Rooplo Kohi through Ashrafiyya literary narrative has the historically real import for Kolhis, Dalits and the Progressives alike. It has contemporary political relevance as it seems in line with the Dalit's tendency to Ashrafize (see Hussain, 2019b; Mal, 200) by labeling Rooplo as 'Shaheed' (Arabic-Sindhi term for the martyr), and by tracing the existing descendants of him. Off and on, individual Kolhis claim to be Rooplo's grand-grandsons²⁵ and are invited in annual anniversaries

²⁵ During the conversational interviews, Dalit activists told that Satram Das of Atran Mori claimed that Rooplo is his grandfather. Comrade Bhagat Padhmon Kolhi of Sindhin jo wandyo

organized to pay homage to Rooplo as guest speakers. This desire to associate with Rooplo is the post-1970s phenomena, resonates with the Sindhi nationalist narrative as it was reframed through political speeches and the politico-literary writings as that of Ali Baba.

The narrative of the story, however, loses its historical grounding and the authenticity as there is not much historical evidence to support the facts related to Rooplo or Kolhi community's role in the fight against the British. The historical chronicles, mostly written by the British officers, do not mention about any such dramatic debacle involving Rooplo Kolhi (see for instance, Raikes, ((1856) 2009). Although the narrative apparently looks emancipatory for Dalits as it highlights Rooplo Kolhi, yet it loses ground as it fails to fully discredit the dominant role of Sodha Thakur rulers of Parkar.

Ali Baba's (1994) narrative undermines the fact that Rooplo fought as a tribal chief of Kolhi's Gohel sub-caste under the supervision of Ladhoo Singh, a Kshatriya or upper caste Hind ruler (see Raikes, ((1856) 2009). Parkar had been under the control of SodhaThakurs during the past several centuries. Talpur and Kalhora rulers of Sindh occasionally used to intervene in Tharparkar to establish their writ, which was often thwarted by the Sodhas. Sodhas of Parkar had their own communal system of management that they used to call 'Gurr Raj', and variant of land

filed a case to get 50 acres of land of Parkar based on his claim that he was grandson of Rooplo. Veerji Kolhi (advisor to minister) and Krishna Kolhi (senator) claimed to have descended from Rooplo Kolhi. Lately, a team of local progressive-minded researchers led by Mir Hasan Arisar, Tahir Mari, Nawaz Kumbhar, Muhib Bheel, Sadam Dars and Ranshal Das attempted to locate the true ancestors of Rooplo Kolhi. According to their findings, Rooplo had a son called 'Harkho', and that Kheto Mal and Gulab Rai were the true grand-grandsons of 'Shaheed Rooplo'.

tax collection called ‘Raney jo Jalang’(sack of Rana) was in vogue by virtue of which all Rajputs /Sodha Thakurs were exempt from the land tax (Qazi, 2015, p.7-8).

While Parkar had its own semi-autonomous political economy, it was not completely independent of the influences of the rulers of Sindh and were given various exemptions and waivers to collect taxes from the local pastoralists and peasants. (see Ojha 1966, p.104). When the British conquered Sindh in 1847, they reduced the Rana’s right and share of taxes to a half, while allowed them to maintain their own jagreers (fiefs) (Qazi, 2015, p.7-8). Similarly, both the Ali Baba as well as Parkari Kolhis do not bring into framework the fact that Meghwar community (Dalits) had already submitted to the British to emancipate from the Sodha Thakurs.

They also undermine the fact that Talpur rulers of Sindh were also subdued by the British and even employed against the Sodha Thakurs (Mal, 2000; Kolhi V. , 2011; Kolhi B. M., 2014). They also neglect the fact that it was the army of Talpur rulers of Sindh that fought together with the British to crush Sodha Thakur resistance in Nangarparkar (see Raikes, ((1856) 2009). They do not acknowledge that Parakari Kolhis, in fact, fought as army men for the Sodha Thakur (Savarna) rulers of Parkar, who did not even consider Kolhis as proper Hindus.

The historically anomalous ethnic and geographical status of Parkar can also be confirmed from the fact that before the annexation of Parkar to Sindh by the British , Parkar was under the jurisdiction of Bhuj (Katch, now in India), and that both the Dalits and the Savarnas of Parakar were ethnically and politically aligned more with their respective caste fellows and co-religionists in Kutch than with the land and people of Sindh the borders of which lied where from the Thar Desert began (see Mal, 2000; Kolhi V. , 2011; Raikes, ((1856) 2009); Kolhi B. M., 2014). Similarly, the local narrative about the British agent Tyrwhitt, who is now demonized as the persecutor, was hailed as local hero by Tharparkari people. Abdul Qadir Junejo writes:

Thari people have unique instinct of liking and making heroes for themselves. Mughal Emperor Akbar was a legendary figure for them only second to local deities, so was General Taroot (Tyrwhitt). Despite the fact that Taroot was the one who overwhelmed Sodha Rajputs and hanged Rooplo Kolhi, he was highly praised and eulogized by Tharis in folk songs, and folklore during and after Taroot's times. (Junejo, 2010, p. 126)

This pre-colonial narrative was gradually overtaken by the postcolonial nationalist narrative whereby the praise of Tyrwhitt was considered as symbolic of the slavish imperialistic attitude. Given this ambiguous history, it can be argued that the Progressive's narrative of Rooplo Kolhi, that is inadvertently, picked up by Dalits as well, is premised on the self-serving all-unifying nationalist fantasy that more than giving the emancipatory push to the Dalit cause rather hampers it. Kolhi activists, consider this representation as the sort of recognition of the value and worth of Kolhi community within the comity of Sindhi castes, and see this re-nationalization of 'Amar (eternal) or 'Shaheed' (Martyr) Rooplo Kolhi', as the drive to create social and political space for their marginal community (Mal, 2000; Kolhi V., 2011; Kolhi B. M., 2014).

Hence, except the minor antipathy towards Ashrafiyya-dominated Sindh that sometimes reflects in Kolhi's hidden script, Parkar is largely imagined by them as the integral part of Sindh, and Rooplo as the foremost Sindhi national hero, the recognition that could not be had without the approval of 'authentic nationalists' (i.e. Ashrafiyya-Savarna elite).



Figure 3: Ashrafiyya Picture taken during the 157th Anniversary of Rooplo Kolhi at Ghousia Complex, Umerkot on August, 20 2016. Source Dalit Sujaag Tehreek (2016)

To reciprocate that recognition and to reaffirm their fragile bonding with the Ashrafiyya class, Kolhis invite Mirs, Sardars and Sayeds as special guests in their programs held to commemorate the martyrdom of Rooplo. See for instance, Figure 3 in which Nawab Yousif Talpur (local Ashrafiyya politician from ruling elite stands in the middle surrounded by local Kokhi activists during the 157th Anniversary of Rooplo Kolhi at Ghousia Complex, Umerkot on August, 20 2016. Yousaf Talpur, in his capacity as the member of National Assembly announces additional school building for a Kolhi village. To demonstrate their closeness to and confidence in Yousaf Talpur, local Kolhi activists Nemdas Kolhi, Poonjho Mal Bheel (Ex, MPA), Asu Bai Kolhi and other Dalit activists stand close to Yousaf Talpur on the stage. Affirmations and the egalitarian rhetoric, for instance, follow from the mouth of Ashrafiyya elite in the following manner.

‘To be Kolhi is the matter of pride. Civilization cannot be erected by becoming Sayed.’
(Sardar Shah)

‘I will try to convince my party leadership to ensure representation of Kolhi community in the parliament.’²⁶ (Sardar Shah)

‘Rooplo Kolhi fought the battle against the British forces for the Sindh, and sacrificed his life. The youth should follow the example’. Nawab Yousaf Talpur

‘We are proud of Rooplo Kolhi. He fought the war for the survival of Sindh’. Nawab Taimur Talpur (MPA)²⁷

‘Rooplo Kolhi memorials will be built in each major city including Karachi’ (Ibrat daily, Sindhi newspaper).

‘The Dravidians and politicians of Sindh declared immortal Rooplo Kolhi, the son of the soil.’²⁸

This ritual of inversion by Ashrafiyya elite to arbitrarily identify with the Dalits, under the influence of Sufi nationalist narrative, dilutes the question of casteism such that Rooplo Kolhi (a Dalit), Hoshoo Sheedi (an Afro-Sindhi descendant of slaves), Dodo Soomro (Sammatt ruling

²⁶ Source: Daily Ibrat (Sindhi newspaper, Dated, 28th August, 2017. URL: http://www.dailyibrat.com/beta/pages/jpp_28082017015347.jpg

²⁷ Source: Sindh Express (daily), Monday, August, 28, 2017. URL: http://sindhexpress.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=130546486&Issue=NP_HYD&Date=20170828

²⁸ Source: Daily Sobh (Sindhi newspaper), Dated, 28th August, 2017. URL: http://www.dailysobh.com/beta/epaper/news/news.php?news_id=236 .

caste elite) and Raja Dahar (7th century Brahmin king of Sindh)²⁹ are represented as standing on the horizontal socioeconomic plane that demands of them to struggle for Sindh. It creates the false dichotomy between the two groups of Ashrafiyya-Savarna classes, namely the Sindhi nationalists and separatists, and the pro-state feudal Sindhi Ashrafiyya class. For instance, a Kolhi activist aligning himself with the nationalists as against the ruling feudal class of Sindh uploaded a Facebook status:

The 159th anniversary of Shaheed Rooplo Kolhi was celebrated by Jeay Sindh Mahaz at Sachal village, Karachi. Chairman of Mahaz, Abdul Khaliq Junejo said that Raja Dahar, Hoshoo Sheedi and Rooplo Kolhi are our valiant heroes, and that Muhammad-bin-Qasim is historically condemned as the imperialist. He said that the anniversaries of Rooplo are being celebrated lately by the ruling elites since the last two-three years to appropriate Rooplo for their vested interests. But they must remember that the resistance of Rooplo was not simply for capturing seat in legislative assembly or to appease any specific sect, but for his land Sindh, the legacy of which rule-hungry elite cannot be the inheritors.

(Ranshal Kolhi, Facebook Status, 24th August, 2019)

These acts of counter-appropriation, condensation and equalizing Savarna-Ashrafiyya and Dalit heroes in the name of resistance against the non-nationalist ruling elite are not liked by some of

²⁹ Some historiographers depict Dahar as an unpopular Brahmin king that ruled over Buddhist majority, and Chach, Dahar's father is believed to be the usurper of Buddhist Rai Dynasty (see Nicolas, 2006; Naik, 2010, p. 32.)

their co-Dalit activists, best classified as Ambedkarites. For instance, an Ambedkarite interviewed by me lamented:

It's not just that simple, that democracy fascinates Dalits. Under it, they eagerly sell out their heroes to nationalists, and give away their gods to Brahmins and *Lohanas*; they are willing to banish all their ancestral gods to exclusively worship Ram, Krishana and Ganesha.

(A Dalit activist, Personal Interview, 2016)

The unabated influence of Sindhi Progressive narrative had been lately (between 2016 and 2019) disturbed by the group of activists affiliated with Dalit Sujaag Tehreek, who were working within several other splinter groups. The change was noticed during the 160th anniversary celebrations held at Judho and Hyderabad by Sindhi Kolhi Itihad and Pakistan Kolhi Itihad in which they consciously took the decision not to invite, as chief guests, the feudal or political class person elite. Yet this not yet institutionalized and abrupt change is not without ideological problem as the majority of Dalits continued to imagine Rooplo and Dalits through Marxist-nationalist lens instead of Ambedkarian one. Pahlaj Kolhi, the organizer of anniversary at Jhudo post on Facebook a happy note:

This was apolitical anniversary. In this anniversary there was no minister, advisor or senator. Despite that the sea of people flooded in, which proves that people have now do not accept this *waderko-bhotarko* (feudal) system.

This supposedly apolitical statement about the program in which they awarded Dalit activists affiliated with different political parties for raising voice of indigenous 'Darawar' communities, framed the issue in a Marxist language of class struggle that obfuscates the problem of casteism. Hence this Dalit agency that is carried away by the Marxist-Ashrafiyya ideology, many Kolhi

activists see this re-nationalization of ‘Amar Rooplo Kolhi’ as the drive to create social and political space for their marginal community (Mal, 2000; Kolhi V., 2011; Kolhi B. M., 2014). Given this ideologically confused nature of Dalit activism, many of them are not much optimistic that the social hierarchies would alter in any fundamental ways.

Looking from the Ambedkarian perspective, this anti-colonial narrative could have been truly emancipatory, if it had also brought into focus the internal colonialism based on exclusion of Dalitbahujans. Since, it was not the case, and the Sufi nationalist representation of the Progressives undermined caste (also gender) as the political factors of oppression and exclusion, the postcolonial emancipation from the British imperialism cannot be understood by the Ambedkarites as the Dalit emancipation from the internal colonialism. Hence, the story of Rooplo Kolhi, as it is depicted and reframed seems quite the reverse of Ambedkarian way of hero-making. For instance it is quite the opposite of the battle of Koregaon, often mentioned by local Ambedkarites in Sindh, in which about 500 Mahar (Meghwar) of Bombay Native Infantry of the East India Company fought against the Peshwa rulers. The event is considered as the revenge of decades of treatment of Mahars as untouchables, and which is reframed as the source of revolutionary inspiration by the Ambedkarites. Millions of Dalits gather each year on the 1st of January in Bhima-Koregaon village in Pune, India to celebrate the event (Zelliot, 2011; Kumhoikar, 2012).³⁰

30, The Battle of Bhima Koregaon Documentary Film Official Release | Director - Somnath Waghamare, Published by Roundtable India on Aug 20, 2017, Direction and Camera - Somnath Waghamare, Editor -Deepu (Pradeep K P), URL:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDw43hJf_IY&feature=share).

To sum up, the symbiosis of the Dalit and Ashrafiyya Progressive narrative seems counterproductive for the Dalit's own emancipation, as it does not allow Dalits to protest against the Ashrafiyya-Savarna elite and rather dilutes the question of existing caste discrimination, reciprocal respect, social inclusion and justice. By showing that Rooplo stood for Parkar, the geographical region which is now projected as the integral part of Sindh, the Progressives suggest to stand for Sindh against the external enemy that may be the British or the Punjabi-Pakistani establishment. Many Dalit activists, mostly Parkari Kolhis, however, do not buy the Progressive's narrative wholeheartedly, and do not consider Pakistani establishment as their enemy. Moreover, they could not have forgotten the persecution that they suffered at the hands of the local Ashrafiyya and Savarna elites of Parkar. For instance, Mavo Kolhi, in the anniversary of Rooplo Kolhi lamented the fact that:

A decade after Rooplo's martyrdom, in 1964 when the British was still there in Parkar, the incident happened in *Holi Garho* in *Pithapur* where Thakurs of *Dedhvero*, and Khosas of *Kabri* ³¹ attacked the Chatro Kolhi and his son (would-be groom). Thereafter, many Kolhis decided to leave Parkar migrate to Barrage area of Sindh to settle there permanently instead of returning back seasonally³².

³¹ Holi Garho is small village in Pithapur which is union council of Nangarparkar. Dedhvero and Kabri are also villages of Nangarparkar that were dominated by the Thakur (Savarna) and Khosa (Baloh Ashrafiyya) caste groups.

³² Transhumance has been a common migratory practice among Parkaris, who used to migrate from Parkar to the plains of Indus (locally known as 'barrage area'). Before Partition of the Sub-continent and the sealing of borders, they used to migrate to Kutch and Malwa in Maharashtra (see Mal, 2000).

The Progressives reconstruction of history could have been truly emancipatory for the Dalits if they had also brought into consideration these narratives of the Parkari that implicate the local Ashrafiyya and Savarna elite; or, for instance, Rooplo along with his community of Dalits had been depicted as fighting against the British or ‘Company’ with the consciousness of the fact that the Dalits were internally colonized and humiliated by the Sodha Thakurs and Ashrafiyya castes. Sindhi short story writers, being under the influence of Ashrafiyya Sufi nationalist narrative could not have gone to that extent to frame their narratives against their own political and literary class.

Given the epistemological disparity between the huge volumes of the Progressive literature that ignores casteism, and the politically significant demographic strength, this Ashrafiyya (Savarna) intervention into Dalit spaces seems highly problematic. Ali Baba’s (1994) depiction of Dalits and women, as it is inspired by their Gandhi-influenced Progressive predecessors, is comparable to the Hindi short stories of Munshi Premchand³³ who have given space to Dalit characters and brings forth Dalit’s exploitation in his stories, but his antidote was inspired by the functionalist approach of Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswathi and Gandhi, and supported the idea of *shuddhi* (purity) and was against religious conversion (Rabbani, 2016; Trivedi, 2017). Their narratives are unlike of Ambedkar’s Dalit, who is courageous and infused with zeal to fight against untouchability and exploitation and live with dignity.

To evade this sociological reality, the Progressives give forth the post-hoc interpretations of the historical narratives, such as in case of Rooplo Kolhi, or appropriated Dalit oppression for their Sufi nationalist cause that diluted the problematisation of casteism (also of gender

³³ To read online some notable short stories of Premchand, see : URL:

<https://www.rekhta.org/stories/eidgah-premchand-stories?lang=ur>. (accessed June 6, 2019).

discrimination) and highlighted the problem of religious persecution, fanaticism and also feudalism. The narrative of Rooplo Kolhi has both emancipatory as well as hegemonic and counter-hegemonic aspects depending upon who patronises whom. Since Rooplo did not primarily fought against Savarna-Ashrafiyya domination, and instead fought for restoring the Ashrafiyya-Savarna hegemony against the British (colonial) domination, he cannot be invoked as a Dalit hero in an essentially Ambedkarian sense. Its dominant nationalist representation creates false pride in Rooplo and rather undermines the agency of the Dalits both in the historical past as well as in the present. By suggesting Dalits to play second fiddle as loyal subordinates to the Ashrafiyya-Savarna castes, the Rooplo's narrative in a way, dilutes the relations of domination and subordination existing between the ruling Ashrafiyya-Savarna and the ruled Dalit castes.

Conclusion

The analysis of the discourse emergent of popular Sindhi short stories reveals that even seemingly pro-Dalit narratives do not adequately expose the problem of casteism in the manner that could lead to Dalit emancipation. It was evident that although the Sufi ethic of interfaith harmony arbitrarily invokes Ashrafiyya morality, and temporarily creates an anxiety in Ashrafiyya consciousness to confront casteism, yet, at the empirical level, it facilitates the Ashrafiyya (but also Savarna) elite to appropriate heroes, histories, events and spaces of Dalits, and invokes token sympathy and compassion for the Dalits and women. Hence, the Progressive Ashrafiyya reader and the activist, instead of feeling remorse or shame on his or her casteist patriarchy, is led to objectify Dalit bodies and appropriate Dalit agency and spaces.

Given this hegemonic influence of local Ashrafiyya class, the internal caste frictions are glossed over through political Sufism or Sindhi nationalism. The seemingly pro-Dalit narratives are, in fact tropes of inter-faith harmony, such as in case of the exchange of persuasive dialogue

in ‘Infidel’ which is often interpreted by Sindhi nationalists and the progressive writers as a caution against the threat to an ‘exemplary’ interfaith harmony that once existed between (Savarna) Hindus and (Sindhi) Muslims; Or they, at best, proffer self-pity as in case of short story ‘Dust of Earth and Stars of Sky’.

These narratives could be imagined out of the vague history, such as in case of Rooplo Kolhi’s reframing as the Sindhi national hero along with Dalit hero, to graft the oppression upon the external ‘other’- that previously was the British Colonial power, and now it has been identified as Pakistani state. Hence it does not help expose the internal-colonialism that predated the British. An Ambedkarite might have taken these stories or the narratives further and have inverted the individual Dalits’ tension into the collective resistance at the level of community. They may make the counterintuitive demands from the Progressives to invert both the pure fiction and the fictionalized history so that the frictions of caste and gender, or the embeddedness of caste, gender and religion could be brought to the fore. Most of the Progressives seem incapable to fulfill that demand as it conflicts with their Sufi nationalist narrative.

Contrary to what Ambedkarism may demand, the stories, in general, did not seem to sufficiently grasp the Dalit lifeworld. Resultantly, instead of giving Dalits emancipating thrust, the stories end up abruptly leading the Ashrafiyya reader (for whose consumption they primarily write) to pity the Dalits and sympathize with them, while leaving Dalits in a state of self-pity. The occasional appearances of Dalit men and women in Progressive narrative rather prove the peripherality of Dalits in Ashrafiyya-dominated spaces, and rather furnish the Ashrafiyya reader and the activist with the reasons to objectify Dalit’s vulnerability, helplessness and women’s body. This Ashrafised and appropriated reframing of Dalitness by the Progressives and Sindhi civil society leads to conclude that although Dalits assert against the caste oppression by priding

in their past, their agency to subvert Ashrafiyya-Savarna hegemony is considerably hampered and appropriated to sever the interest of their oppressors. It can, therefore, be argued that colored in Sufi nationalist ideology, the Progressives' definition of 'Dalit's oppression does not help invoke Dalit agency to emancipate from Sayedism or Ashrafiyya domination.

Moreover, Progressive's narratives resonate with the functionalist approach that does not allow for radical questioning of caste. Amar Jaleel, Naseem Kharal and Ali Baba (1994) or even Noorul Huda Shah's depiction of Dalits and women, as it is inspired by their Gandhi-influenced Progressive predecessors, is comparable to the Hindi short stories of Munshi Premchand who has given space to Dalit characters and brings forth Dalit's exploitation in his stories, but his antidote was inspired by the functionalist approach of Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswathi and Gandhi. as seemed supportive of the idea of 'purity' and was against religious conversion. This ideological trajectory goes against the fundamental premises of Ambedkarian ideology that aims at inspiring courage and zeal to resist not merely against untouchability but for the annihilation of caste and the dignified life. . In the context of Sindh, Progressives, unwittingly or wittingly following Gandhian line, come up with the post-hoc explanations and the narratives of history of the oppressed for fulfilling their Sufi nationalist goal of uniting caste or rather diluting casteism without necessarily confronting casteism and gender discrimination. Hence, it is evident that while the 'Progressives' in their writings and the ruling Ashrafiyya elite in their political acts apparently assume a critical posture towards religious suppression, casteism and or Sayedism, they are largely apologetic in their tenor, and do not show any commitment to the annihilation of casteism and inclusion of Dalits into privileged spaces of politics, society and culture. Given the epistemological disparity between the huge volumes of the Progressive literature that ignores

casteism, and the politically significant demographic strength, this Ashrafiyya (Savarna) intervention into Dalit spaces seems highly problematic.

Related to this epistemological disparity, is the lack of privileged space afforded to Dalit writers to express their feelings and emotions that no Ashrafiyya writer can. Except a few, which lie at the margin, there is not noteworthy Dalit short story writers found among the comity of the Progressives in Sindh. This situation, at least, at the level of epistemic justice or equality, continues to be heavily tilted in favor of the Progressive Ashrafiyya writers whose primary aim, even while giving voice to the Dalits, has been to suggest the unity of all Sindhi castes including Dalit castes against the external Ashrafiyya oppressor.

The literature produced in Sindhi language essentially gives voice to the Ashrafiyya-Savarna sentiments and cherishes Ashrafiyya value systems that are fundamentally premised on the superiority of Sayeds, Sammats, Baloch and Savarna (Lohana, Brhamin, Thakur) castes. The Dalit middle class finding herself incapable to cope up with the highly elaborate Progressive narrative, either takes sides with the Sufi nationalists (Sindhi separatists, Marxists, pro-Pakistanis) of one type or the other, all of whom are invariably pro-Ashrafiyya in their social and political orientation and indifferent to the plight of Dalits. Given this Dalit predicament, it can be argued that the Progressives' social imaginary defies the Ambedkarian approach to society and politics that argues for the eradication of casteism through concrete measures and conscious engagement. It can, therefore, be concluded that the seemingly progressive narratives framed in religio-political idiom may offer to the oppressed not more than a token sympathy, compassion, self-pity and false pride in vague history. Instead, they allow the appropriation of spaces and events of the oppressed, and the objectification of oppressed bodies by the oppressor.

References

- Abro, Jamal (2015). Pishu Pasha aen Biyon Kahariyon. Roshni Publications Kandiaro
- Junejo, A.J (2004), "Sindhi Adab Ji Mukhtasir Tareekh" (1st Ed), Sindhi Language Authority.
- Ahmad, I. (2003). A Different Jihad: Dalit Muslims' Challenge to Ashraf Hegemony. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4886-4891.
- Ambedkar, B. (1944). *Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi* (3rd ed.).
- Ambedkar, B. R. (1947). *States and Minorities (Memorandum on the Safeguards for Scheduled Castes)*. Bombay: Government of India.
- Ambedkar, B. R. (2014 (1991)). Dr. Babasaheb B. Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Vol:1-9 (V. Moon, Ed.) New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India. Retrieved from <http://www.mea.gov.in>.
- Anderson, Benedict (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York/London: Verso.
- Baba, Ali (1994). *Munhjiyoon Kahariyoon*. Roshni Publication (First Edition), Digital Edition (2018) by Sindh Salamat Ghar URL: https://books.sindhsalamat.com/book.php?book_id=736. (accessed on July 8, 2019).
- Behdad, A. & Thomas, D. (2011). *A companion to comparative literature*. UK: Wiley – Blackwell.
- Bheel, Ganpat Rai (2017) *Journey of a Dalit Corpse*. Translated by Ghulam Hussain. Roundtable India. URL: <https://roundtableindia.co.in> (accessed August 8, 2019).
- Buehler, Arthure F. (2012). "Trends of ashrafization in India." In *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*, by Morimoto Kazuo, 231-246. Routledge.

Bhushan, S. (2002). Representing the Underdogs: Dalits in the Literature of Premchand. *Studies in History*, 18(1), 51–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/025764300201800103>.

Chandio, J (2016) Sandi Jogiyan Zaat. Peacock Publishers, Karachi.

CIFORB (2018). Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan, The University of Birmingham, UK.

Damrosch, D. (2009). *How to read world literature*. UK: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

[Sisir Kumar Das](#) (2005) History of Indian Literature: 1911-1956, struggle for freedom : triumph and tragedy. Sahitya Akademi.

Eagleton, T. (2002). *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge.

Gramsci, Antonio (1971) Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, New York, International Publishers.

Guru, G. (1995, October 14-21). Dalit women talk differently. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30(41), 2548-2550. Retrieved Accessed: 28-10-2017 20:35 UTC, from Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4403327>.

Guru, G. (2000). Dalits in pursuit of modernity. *India: Another Millennium*, 123-137.

Guru, G., & Sarukai, S. (2012). The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.

Guru, Gopal. (2011a). "Liberal Democracy in India and the Dalit Critique." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 78 (1): 99-122. doi:10.1353/sor.2011.0047.

Guru, Gopal. (2011b). "The Idea of India: 'Derivative, Desi and Beyond'." *Economic and Political Weekly* 46 (37): 36-42. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23047279>.

Hussain. Dr. Fahmida (1997) “Adabi Tanqeed, Fann aen Tareekh”. Sindh Adabi Academy, Karachi.

Hussain, Ghulam (2017). Mainstreaming Dalitbahujan perspective in Pakistan’.

Doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.23455.87200. URL: <https://www.researchgate.net>. (accessed July 9, 2019).

Hussain, G. (2018, January-June). Legitimacies of Caste Positions in Pakistan: Resolving 'upper caste' delimma in shared space of knowledge production and emancipation. *Panjab University Reserach Journal (Arts)*, XLV(1), 43-56.

Hussain, Ghulam (2019a), “Understanding Hegemony of caste in political Islam and Sufism in Sindh, Pakistan”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 54(5) 716–745. DOI: 10.1177/0021909619839430.

Hussain, Ghulam (2019b), “Dalits are in India, not in Pakistan’: Exploring the Discursive bases of the Denial of Dalitness under the Ashrafiyya Hegemony”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 1–27. DOI: 10.1177/0021909619863455.

Hussain, G. (2019c) “*Dalit Adab (April-May and June-July Editions)*”, Mendeley Data, V2, doi: 10.17632/fxfchc32ct.2.

Hussain, Ghulam (2019d), “*Dalit Adab (Pre-prints by Ganpat Rai Bheel)*”, Mendeley Data, V1, doi: 10.17632/fmg2ghd4ht.1

Hussain, Ghulam (2019e), “*Articles and Books of Ganpat Rai Bheel*”, Mendeley Data, V1, doi: 10.17632/n4p7hc64ft.1.

Ilaiah, K. (2010). *The Weapon of the Other: Dalitbahujan Writings and the Remaking of Indian Nationalist Thought*. India: Pearson Education .

Jaleel , A. (2010) *Lahandar Sijj Ji Laam*. Katcho Publication.

Jaleel , A. (1998) *Dil Ji Dunya*. Roshni Publications. Kandiaro

Jaleel, A. (2007) *Ranni Kot jo Khazano*. New Fields.

- Jaleel, A. (2012) Jeejal Munhji Mau. Kacrho Publications.
- Junejo, Dr.Faiz (2015) “Tabqati Fikir Ja Sindhi Adab Tey Asar ” [Sindhi]. Sindh Sudhar Publishers, Sindh.
- Kazuo, M. (2004). Toward the Formation of Sayyido-Sharifology: Questioning Accepted Fact. *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies*(22), 87-103.
- Kolhi, B. M. (2014). *Paracheen Lok: Ekweeheen Sadi Jey Aaeeney Mein* (1st ed.). Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan: Himat Printers and Publishers.
- Kolhi, V. (2011, August 23). *152nd Death Anniversary of A National Hero Defender of his Motherland, Amar Rooplo Kohli*. Retrieved from Veerji Kolhi: A Social Activist: <http://veerji-kolhi.blogspot.com/2011/08/152nd-death-anniversary-of-national.html>
- Kothari, Rita (2009) *Unbordered Memories: Sindhi Stories of Partition*, Penguin Groups, New Delhi.
- Kothari, Rita. (2001). Short Story in Gujarati Dalit Literature. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(45), 4308-4311. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4411356>
- Kumar, V., (2018) Locating Dalit Perspective of Social Reality, *International Journal of Indigenous and Marginal Affairs*, January-June 2018, 4(1), pp.57-78.
- Kumar, Vivek. 2016a. "Caste, Contemporaneity and Assertion." *Economic and political weekly* LI (50): 48-86.
- Kumar, Vivek. 2016b. "How Egalitarian Is the Indian Sociology." *Economic and Political Weekly* LI (25): 33-39.
- Kumbhojkar, S. (2012). Contesting Power, Contesting Memories: The History of the Koregaon Memorial. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 103-107.
- Kundu, M. S. (2017, October 28). Et Tu ‘Feminists’?: A response to the Kafila signatories. *Roundtable India, Roundtable India*. Retrieved October 28, 2017, from https://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9216%3

[Aet-tu-feminists-a-response-to-the-kafila-signatories&catid=119%3Afeature&Itemid=132](https://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8177%3Afeature&Itemid=132).

- Lata, P. (2015, May 8). Silenced by Manu and ‘Mainstream’ Feminism: Dalit-Bahujan Women and their History. *Roundtable India*. Retrieved October 4, 2017, from https://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8177%3Afeature&Itemid=132.
- Levesque, J., & Bui, C. (2014). Umar Marvi and the Representation of Sindh: Cinema and Modernity in the Margins. *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*, 5(2), 119–128. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974927614547990>
- Margaret, M. S. (2012, March 8). Dalit Feminism. *Roundtable India*. Retrieved October 4, 2017, from https://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content.
- Mal, P. (2000). *Lok Sagar Ja Moti*. Mirpurkhas: Parkari Audio Visual Project, PCDP
- Manik (1992) Rujj aen Parada. Roshni Publications, Kandiaro. URL: https://books.sindhsalamat.com/book.php?book_id=638. (accessed June 17 2019)
- Malkani, Mangharam. (1993). “Sindhi Nasar Ji Mukhtasir Tareekh”, Roshini Publications, Kandiaro.
- Memon, Dr. Ghafoor (2002) ‘Sindhi Adab jo Fikri Pasmanzar’, Shah Latif Bhittai Chair.
- Naik, C. D. (2010). *Buddhism and Dalit: Social Philosophy and Traditions*. Delhi: Kalpas Publications.
- Nicolas, F. G. (2006). From Mongols to Mughals: Religious Violence in India 9th-18th Centuries. *Pacific Northwest Regional Meeting American Academy of Religion*. Gonzaga University.
- Ojha, Mangharam (1966) (6th Ed, 2006). *Puranon Parkar*. Sindhi Adabi Board

- Paleejo, Rasool Bux (2012) 'Tanqeedi ain Takhleeki Adab'. Center for Peace & Civil Society (CPCS).
- Paleejo, Rasool Bux (2016, 1st ed. 1978) 'Sandi Zaat Hanjan'. Roshni Publications. Kandiaro.
- Qazi, Dr.Azad (2015) Shaheed Rooplo Kolhi, Roshni Publications Kandiaro.
- Raikes, C. S. (1856) (2009). *Memoir on the Thurr and Parkur Districts of Sind:Selections from the Records of the Bomnbay Government*. California: Sani Hussain Panhwar.
- Rabbani, Ghulam (November, 2016). 'Where are the Pasmandas in Urdu short stories?' in Forwardpress. URL: <https://www.forwardpress.in/2016/11/where-are-the-pasmandas-in-urdu-short-stories/?fbclid=IwAR3GSzNjml20RUboi3tCnq-ytT4jWYAbkf59dkJIEFDZv32wYXiJKiYdkJo> (accessed, June 16, 2019).
- Ramachandran, S. (2004). 'Poisoned Bread': Protest in Dalit Short Stories. *Race & Class*, 45(4), 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396804043864>.
- Sayed, G. M. (2013). *Sindhu Desh*. Reproduced by Sani Hussain Panhwar.
- Sayed, GM (1952). *Paigham-i-Latif*. (the online translated book),URL: <http://www.gmsyed.org/latif/book4-chap10.html>. Accessed on, January 22, 2019
- Sayed GM (1974) *Sindh Ja Soorma*. Naen Sindh Academy, Karachi. URL: https://books.sindhshamat.com/book.php?book_id=472. (accessed on June 6 2019)
- Shah, N. (2007a) *Rin aen Rujj jo Itehas*. Roshini Publication Kandiaro.
- Shah, N (2007b) *Jalawatan*. Roshni Publications, Kandiaro.
- Siddiqi, F. H. (2012). *The politics of ethnicity in Pakistan: the Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir ethnic movements*. Routledge.
- Siraj (2009). *Sindhi Language*. Hyderabad: Sindhi Langage Authority.
- Sripathi, A. (2017, October 25). *Shit Has Hit the Fan With Raya Sarkar's Post On Sexual Harassers in Indian Academia. But Will It Just Stop There?* Retrieved October 28, 2017,

from The ladies finger: <http://theladiesfinger.com/sexual-harassment-indian-academia-facebook/>.

Trivedi, H. (2017). The Urdu Premchand and the Hindi Premchand. *Revista Brasileira de Literatura Comparada*, 19(30), 69-90.

Velaskar, P. (2012). Education for Liberation: Ambedkar's Thought and Dalit Women's Perspectives. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 9(2), 245-271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097318491200900206>.

Wajid, Muhammad (2017) Forced Religious Conversion of Hindus in Sindh (Myth or Reality): A Case Study of Shahdadpur City (M.Phil. Thesis). International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Zelliot, E. (2011). Connected peoples: Pilgrimage in the structure of the Ambedkar movement. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 4(1), 1-6.