



**BEYOND THE OFFICIAL RECORD: REIMAGINING THE 1971
PARTITION THROUGH THE COUNTER-NARRATIVE OF HUSAINI'S
“KARIMA”**

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the short story of Aamer Hussein, which is closely read in the paper, is the one which narrates the fictional story of Karima the 1971 partitioning of Pakistan into Bangladesh that used to be East wing and Pakistan was the former Western Pakistan region in the united Pakistan. Utilizing Cara the notions of Cilano as they are presented in her book; National Identities in Pakistan: The 1971 War in the paper examines contemporary Pakistani Fiction (2011), as a theoretical framework in some aspects of this division and examines the theme of oppression in the migrants/refugees camps, the distinction in classes between the sons of the soil and the Bihari. Identity crisis, Muhajirs and violence in the 1971 partition. The article also examines Muslims nationalism slogan in pre-partition of subcontinent and expresses Muslim commitment towards this reason during partitions of 1947 and 1971. The paper describes that how, so that to cope with either the non-existence or lack of the state owned stories, the vacuum is filled with the fictional stories such as the ones of Karima and dwell upon different aspects of the historical events such as that of the 1971 partition uninhibitedly. By making all dilemmas and pains projected upon titular character of this paper describes the 1971 Partition as a tragic incident of the short story.

KEYWORDS

Partition 1971, Aamer Hussein, Fictional Narratives, Karima, State Narratives.

Introduction

Social, political, economic and cultural environments of fictional narratives are carried on historical events through the means of fictive characters in order to see history of state or nation (Amjad et al., 2021; Parveen & Akram, 2021). “The genres of literature of fiction or non-fiction in any state or country can be instrumental in that learning about past happenings because such literary forms are creative enough to stand the test of time” (Abid, 2022) state or nation’s pressure. The film is a short story of Karima by Aamer Hussein which is based on his short story collection. Electric Shadows is built upon the 1971 Partition of Pakistan and demonstrates that social and 1971 Civil War caused political turmoil which led to killing at mass level, crimes, vandalism, violence, dismemberment, anarchy and displacement of East Pakistani Bengali as migrants/refugees. The readers can witness unbelievable attitude and behavior change of in Karima. “Individuals of East Pakistan against individuals of West Pakistan as well as disquieting and senseless scenes of murder of innocent individuals. By way of the main actor of Karima, Hussein follows the story of a victim of Partition, who happened to be a victim of the Partition issued in 1971 in Bangladesh” (Hali, 2018), Pakistan and then to London. The story is organized in a way that it is written in alternating the first person narrations first character is of a first character who is not named but makes contributions. It is proposed in parenthesis with a few paragraphs to the story and his comment as the second narrator is Karima, the paragraphs written by Karima are marked by a hyphen symbol (-) at start of the paragraphs. The story is told by the unknown narrator, who is a writer residing in London who reads letters of Karima, and also, at her



request, writes letter to her kinsmen in Karachi, Rawalpindi and occasionally to somebody in Dhaka. Once the family of Karima arrived, she had to serve a mistress in a Karachi, in the aftermath of the 1971 Partition, as one of the Dhaka-based Karachiis big house to whom Karima had to relocate to London in the treatment of her son. After the manner in which they will be treated once they leave to Karachi, the mistress of Karima informs Karima about her son Shahzad's death, Karima loses her last relation with after this tragic news. Pakistan, and opts to remain in London without permission of a Bengali butcher to enable her to make money, more cash and remit it to her family members back in Pakistan. The denial of the assertion that Karima is a prostitute personality, said Hussein himself in his interview to Mushtaq ur Rasool Bilal. She can never be (2013) that Karima is always foreign to London and though she has gone there; she cannot speak English in such a way that she is not a character of different breeds.

Literature Review

According to Sobhan (2017) Hussein is a fiction poet. It appears that music runs through his stories. In the works of Hussein, we find a visual beauty in details of his feelings in a poetic form. In his narrations, Hussein picturesquely creates poems to give the stories a poetic touch. "To read Hussein is to: sit before a story teller and listen to a story which is ancient". (Hamza, 2023) reviewing Hussein short story, Sweet Rice, notes that his writing is marred by the use of the first person plural stories are concerned with the problem of identity, cultural conflict, and independence struggles. Sweet Rice explains how colonization and cultural damage the sense of self assimilation. He effectively demonstrates the suffocation of identity crisis, cultural ambivalence and hybridity as well as independence search with the help of the personality of Shireen, the main character of the narrative. Her effort to be independent is brought out when she is rejected by her husband because of her husband being repelled by her a job start-up and taking into consideration her medical degree as a degree of a third world country, she resolves to compose a book about the recipes such as Sweet Rice and other conventional subcontinental dishes. Hussein uses Shireen to send a powerful impact that only by cutting off the bonds with the social norms and the adherence to one own can lead to the true emancipation desires. Finally, there is a strong message in Sweet Rice; embracing our culture and making our own ways might bring back a happy and problematic life. In his short stories, Hussein employs a small and brief style of writing. By implying first person address, he fills the distance between the reader and the characters forming a sort of understanding between them. Hussein develops the themes in his short story, Turquoise of cultural hybridity, identity and time. There are two protagonists of the story, Nusra and as they live in several transitional spaces, Danny, have difficulties trying to define themselves. "The characters of Hussein are primarily diasporic and, as such, have a sort of split personality between their family life and self-development" (Khan, 2013, 2017; Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023). This way, cultural hybridity does not disappear a running motif in the majority of his work. He brings out the challenges and complications to hybridize the ground with the application of diverse tools such as language and culture. "Hussein's stories reveal that cultural identities are never static, instead they change with time and are not bound within specific boundaries" (Abbas, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2022). Another is a novella by Hussein that seeks his writings of identity crisis and hybridity. Gulmohar Tree, puts across the same concerns. A human being can experience identity crisis as they pass through establishing oneself in a new metropolis or country. The title of the novella, an "Other Gulmohar Tree", signifies the presence of an Other Gulmohar Tree story much meaning



by very clearly showing how culture and identity can be transformed. It also shows that the same happens to Usman and Lydia once they change culture.

Research Question

1. How has Husaini's "Karima" projects the reimagining the 1971 Partition through the Counter-Narrative?

Theoretical Framework

In reference to his review of the book of Cilano titled National Identities in, Khan (2013) wrote as follows: The Pakistani War 1971: The War in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Pakistan: The War of 1971 is selected to be used as theoretic structure of the paper under consideration, quite rightly evaluates the fact that she denies the official state stories on the 1971 Partition, claiming that it is fiction that defines the thorough reality of this very event as the trait of many truths, according to her, is a part of fiction. She interprets the Pakistani identity as constructed in literature which tells the stories and exposes several facets of the 1971 Partition through making a detailed reading of different fictitious stories. That, as Cilano secures the preeminence of the fictions of narratives about states so as to arrive at truths and react to history, the text of the paper is a fictional account of the Partition of 1971 in response to Karima. The lack of official narratives that cannot be explained by the fact that media are censored in terms of war. Among others, very late declassification of The Report of Hamoodur Rehman Commission Inquiry (hitherto) about the vacuum of narratives on Pakistani position was called The Report) on the 1971 War were saturated with English and Urdu fictions regarding the 1971 War. Cilano's book "situates its studies of English and Urdu language fictions on the war on this background in an attempt to fill this vacuum" (2011, p. 2). Further, the act of repentance by Pervez Musharraf somehow made a place to literary narratives to the people of Bangladesh in 2002 publications on the war and Partition of 1971 and Pakistan. Cilano, in his dealings with The Report, notes that it does not give a satisfactory narrative for the events of 1971 (p. 15). The White and the main report of the commission. According to Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan, the Awami League in East Pakistan intended but the 1974 Supplement of Commission is not a repeat of an armed rebellion of March 26, 1971 with the preliminary findings of The Report (p. 19-20). Real reasons are far more-harsh to find about partition. Cilano feels that despite so much inadequacy still The Report has a plays a major role in developing a narrative of 1971 but it appears that The Report is incapable of doing so findings of the various realities and shifts. According to her, the findings of The Report are poor but it introduces a narrative space where the fiction of 1971 animate is created what might have happened and what the future of that year and its aftermath might bring (p. 26). Cilano explores that post-partition Pakistan and pre-partition India cultivated an unnatural relationship between so, idea of national identity of Pakistan which was founded on Islam and one language in particular and Pakistanis was religion oriented (p. 28). This Pakistani feast of Pakistanis became the narrative of Pakistani nationalists of state and fiction.

Results and Discussion

The titular role of Karima played by Hussein leads to the investigation of the 1971 Partition. The story is told in the form of a Bihari girl Karima as a protagonist rationales that caused Karima to leave East Pakistan and go to West Pakistan along and with all the repressions that had befallen her in that entire journey. Now, it is of utmost significance to appreciate different causes of the



1971 Partition as Cilano (2011) her-self believes that Indian Muslims could claim only by the Muslim separatism as a pretext of their independent country. Farzana Shaikh perceives the Muslim nationalism as an oppressive identity since whoever they are they are not the Congress (Shaikh; 2009, quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 31). In such a way, Cilano drives the point of the existence of Muslim nationalism as employed by Muslim the concept of leaders as a compensation to Indian nationalism and achieve a territorized one nation: Pakistan. And to sustain this concept of Muslim nationalism Muslims in 1947 immigrated to the West and East Pakistan. Bihars are important among such migrants. Cilano also mentions a Bihari which refers to the Indian Muslims who had moved to East Pakistan in 1947 and many of these Muslims were of Indian State of Bihar (p. 69). “Karima references the narrative of migration of the family of her husband Badshah and her parents out of Patna, Bihar: they fled away, both his parents and mine when the country was partitioned by strong ones” (Hussein, 2014). Biharis are individuals who had moved to East Pakistan because of ideological reasons and Muslim nationalism slogans. Historically, Cilano hurls the concept of Muslim nationalism as spurious identity to Pakistanis because there was excessive language, cultural and political diversities among the nationals of that newly formed country of Pakistanis. “Nasr notes that the most troublesome thing about Pakistan was the way they dealt with the discourse of identity that had even created it but disallow other communities to carry the process of increment further, fragmentation” (Cilano, 2011). This fear of fragmentation was put into practical use in 1971 when partition took place because of numerous factors. Pakistan had two wings and included both political and linguistic divisions. “In the Supplement of The Report, the states of General Farman Ali, says: [t]he entire spirit of West. This was the case with Pakistanis completely, they are not ready to be subdued by East Pakistanis. Politically” (Cilano, 2011)

Maltreatment of the Refugees/Migrants Camps

One was the mass level migration of Bengalis who used during the civil war of 1971 to stay in West Pakistan was obliged to fly to their newfound country Bangladesh and equally a large number of people who had felt Muslim nationalism chose to emigrate towards Bangladesh and they moved to West Pakistan. Among the prominent ones were the Biharis them. “Refugees/migrants were required to remain in the before they could be resettled back in the new country camps that were dreadful homes to the migrants because a study conducted by Arendt indicates that the camps proposed: the sole viable alternative to a non-existent homeland” (Cilano, 2011). At one point, Karima makes a call to unknown narrator in the story to remind the horrendous scene of their refugees/migrants camps. “A story of oppression is clear as Karima warns the unknown narrator that in the camps there was: [c]inconvenience, dirt, starvation, complaining masses. We had lost all of it” (Hussein, 2014). The camps being a habitat only represent fear and maltreatment that fell on refugees/migrants as Karima further continues: sometimes the shit-stink of those camps still pervades my nostrils and I consider that it was the smell of fear (p. 24). A large number of Biharis is still languishing in the camps that have become slums. “The upper middle that had been educated class Bihari refugees are being compelled to live in filth, they have gone through starvation and have no access healthcare and education centers” (Hali, 2018). “Cilano depicts degradation of the camps his short story says by Naeem Aarvi, narrator in his story, the one entitled Godhara Camp that no one could think that a camp was pitched in desert and it was unintelligible that it would grow into “a town with many people in it” (Aarvi, 2011).



Class Dissimilarity between Sons of the Soil and Muhajirs

Migration has created two classes such as those of sons of soil and the Muhajirs. As true Pakistanis the Muhajirs abandoned their lands and properties to ideological Muslim nationalism. Yet these are the sons of the soil or natives who steal on privileges of that specific territory and the migrants are marginalized. This is the concept of advantages that Cilano mentions and privileges in that the characters of *Moth Smoke* the novel by Mohsin Hamid refer to Daru and Shuja. Daru is pictured as drug dealer and his customer Shuja belongs to a large feudal family (Hamid quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 38). Cilano also hint that the sons of the land steal favor and promote such networks that suit them. “The terrible conditions that motivate Daru (member of 1947 migrant family) to sell drugs are opposite painfully with the facility and unblushing impunity with which individuals of the kind of Shuja (the sons) combated of the soil) operate” (Cilano, 2011). So there are acute socio-class disparities between the sons of the soil and the Muhajirs.

Karima, a Muhajir born in Dhaka in West Pakistan, following the 1971 Partition, was forced to suffer a lot due to her being a Muhajir, on the contrary native ladies of West. “Pakistan appeared to live nice life in modern times. Karima, when describing her life in East Pakistan, says, we lived very well, and people would refer us as the royal family since we eat good food and we are happy-faced people” (Husseini, 2014). But as the tragedy of the partition took place and her position shifted to that of Muhajir in Karachi, life became worse for her. She was forced to work in a big house in Defence where her second husband Rahim worked was working as a “chauffeur”. Karima says: I started working in the same house, in which she was forced to iron and sew clothes and take care of the needs of mistress. Mistress being from such a luxury lifestyle was something that sons of the soil could enjoy and Karima has to work as a servant to satisfy her migrant family (p. 26). However, now Rahim was not pleased with the treatment they received in West Pakistan. Pakistan. They are forced to occupy in a two-room dwelling under a stair in this new country they are to share an external lavatory with the rest of the individuals of the same neighborhood. While the sons of the soil enjoy the luxury of big houses in Defence and other desirable parts of the country, the Muhajirs live in small rooms. Karima continues to say how discontent Rahim to say that his disappointment in the new country was obvious (p. 27). Thus, there was an element of social inequalities between the sons of the soil and the Muhajirs. Cilano, in her effort in order to indicate the mistreatment that the Muhajirs were subjected to, is alluded to by Intizar Hussain short story *City of Sorrows* in which one of the characters tells how even “After the circumstances, no change can be made to the refugees/migrants and to every land is equally inhuman, even the land of refuge and one own motherland” (Hussain, 2008). The difference can be further viewed as Karima has his first son Shahzad who is viewed as a burden on the family. Karima says that Shahzad was another mouth to feed, to clothe and send to school. As Saima, a daughter of sons of the soil was celebrating her birthday. “At the time when Shahzad had little to eat and his mother was in need of his better life, the birthday party of little Miss Saima were undergoing service of fried savouries and sticky cakes and pink pastries” (Husseini, 2014). Sahib children were living their lives well into a big tape-recorder, play-pop music which was turned on and Shahzad, was innocent, was old, and dispatched to work as a mechanic (pp. 27-28). Karima went so far as to embrace illegal stay in London to get herself a larger paycheck so that she could assist her Pakistani family and in that attempt she even was obliged to work with a Bengali butcher and received once a slap at his hands. On my part, he says: Karima: He hit me once only (p. 31). The



family of Karima had to suffer after migration at the same time in Pakistan the family of the Saheb, the sons of the soil, were privileged of life.

Ideological Nationalism: Pakistani/Muslim

The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations defines the term nationalism as applied in two similar senses, first, to designate an ideology and secondly, to characterize a feeling (Evans and Newnham, 1998). “It is important to assume Muslim separatism as a foundation of nationalism of this ideology, Bihars and other Muslims abandoned their homeland on the call of Jinnah to acquire a new country and they took a journey to west or eastwards since they were devoted to the ideology of a homeland of the Muslims in India” (Cilano, 2011). The Bihari Sacrifices of community to the establishment of Pakistan in 1946-47 and the Civil war in 1971. 203 Pakistan languages and humanities Review (PLHR). July-September, 2023, Vol. 7, No. 3 show their persistence, loyalty, commitment and commitment to the cause of a unified Pakistan (Siddiquei and Shahid, 2022). According to Karima, her ancestors arrived in East Pakistan through a lot of sacrifices and they believed that they were able to pursue their beliefs in peace and lead their lives in. in the new country (Hussein, 2014). Karima’s attachment with Muslim nationalism is also best seen when she explains what Pakistan is the country that was meant to be for them to “belong”. Her husband was rearing slogan ideological Muslim state as he told, long live Pakistan before a mob of Mukti Bahini. Moreover he thought that Punjabi Biharis and other West were to be rescued by their soldiers who are their friends. Pakistani Muslims of marauding Banglas Badshah did not say before his murder. Joy Bangla, Joy Mukti Bahini instead he became livid at the mob and gave them a declaration that they were Bangla traitors”. It is Pakistan,he continued saying “Pakistan Zindabad” and the seconds before his death he replied: I will die and live in Pakistan. And eventually to Pakistan which was outcome of the Muslim separatism, he lost his life (Italics in original, p. 24). Karima is a definition of West Pakistan as their new country as they migrate. Her Karachi identity is defined as her family; “Bihari” and “Pakistani” (p. 26). Migration of the ancestors of Karima to East Pakistan first time adhere to Muslim ideologies and coexist in harmony and subsequent West migration of Karima family. The death of Pakistan as well as the death of her husband are both meanings of their sacrifices towards ideological Pakistani/Muslim nationalism. The Civil War of 1971 aroused violence because of majorities in both sides of Pakistan became hostile towards their ethnic and lingual minorities. Released on 5 August 1971, The White Rabble-rousing and violent are written on paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan and subsequently The Report about the actions of Awami league in the March 1971. The Report and The White Paper as a whole reasoned that together with political negotiations, Awami League had plans to initiate armed rebellion and conquer by force should they not find their so called rights within constitutional struggle (Cilano, 2011, pp. 19-20). Thousands of Bihars were in these bloody attacks arrested, killed, and displaced, compelled to run out of their houses and run into refugee camps. “Thousands of people deserted their homes with fear of life, and the state seized their property in. Bangladesh” (Sattar, 2013). “Bands of after the cancellation of Assembly opening of March 3. Mukti Bahini killed thousands of Bihars and other West pacifists” (Vogler, 2010). Karima is a narrative on violence because the story is full of violent actions all though visible. Karima informs the unidentified narrator that there were the Punjabi soldiers, who arrived were tales of student massacres, peasant and passers-by Karima’s husband was and murdered by a score of Mukti Bahini and he was given a painful death being piled on fire. Karima, reports that it was the same man who had attempted to rape her when



she was dressed in her thin night sari, assaulted Badshah and burned her man. “The consequences of that act of violence were so great that even Karima recollects that scene when she says: The smell of burning flesh still sconks my nostrils” (Hussein, 2014). As her husband was burning, he inquired Karima to run. The violence of the 1971 Civil War is also further revealed when Karima escapes. She ran through the smoke of houses, over many burning bodies under the sky which was covered with the smoke of shame and among brothers pecking out each other with their throats (p. 25). Karima’s Mother-in-law, was mean to her and her first son as she believed that Shahzad had a bad omen to the family and had sucked out the life of his father. While Karima denied the claim of her mother-in-law and said that she was only the head of two the wings united and divided countries were the ones that made brothers against each other and they were even to pull out each other throats and their sisters wombs had all been because of violence and backwash of violence that Karima lost her in the first place loved husband Badshah and then her son Shahzad who aspired to be a star but died as a mechanic and, nevertheless, lost his life. Once of death of Shahzad, Karima heard once again, through nostalgia and reminiscences of the face of marauders and the frightened eyes of the one that ran away to save their lives, when Mukti Bahini had come into their camp. Karima liseth in whole series of violence in: Lord, your floods and storms, they no respects one, yet love us poor best of all, (p. 27)

Conclusion

Karima is a daughter of Biharis but is homeless in all the countries. The leaders of Muslim League could only be territorialized because of nationalism country-state yet this ideology would not unite both wings of the country as Pakistan was the first postcolonial country to be torn apart. Living a good life in Karima was forced to undergo a lot because of her identity as an East Pakistan, prior to Partition in 1971. Bihari girl in the 1971 and also in the post-civil war in West Pakistan and in London. Even though her family, particularly her husband made a lot in the name of ideological Pakistani nationalism and he even gave his life but still they could not live a good life as a prestigious one they were pushed to the level of Bihari migrants in West Pakistan. The paper concludes that, even though the Muhajirs abandon their territories and wealth toward Pakistani nationalism, nevertheless their selfhood was not able to be formed as a Pakistani. Mass level was aroused by the 1971 Civil War genocide and led to another tale of oppression and torment of partition. A large description of the number of refugees/migrants being killed and those who managed to survive had to encounter dejection in refugee camps and when they arrived back to the country of their choice they were not received there as well. Instead, there arose a differences in the classes between natives (the sons of the soil) and the Bihari as the sons of the soil migrants (Muhajirs) led a prestigious life migrants were marginalized. The Bihari migrants who are victims of identity crisis continue the fight to acquire a presence in the land of their preferred country: Pakistan.

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