

## 'PROGRESSIVE THOUGHT' AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH FICTION

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### Abstract

*In this paper, the author discusses how the Pakistani English fiction of the modern period reinvents the nation through the prism of the progressive political ideology and the commentary of culture. This paper examines the use of these texts in challenging authoritarian, sectarian, and patriarchal institutions that established the national story of Pakistan by analyzing Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and Nadeem Aslam respectively. It is based on postcolonial theory and tradition of intellectual writing of the South Asian Progressive Writers/Movement, and argues that the novels can be used to advance civil and ethical vision of nationhood grounded on pluralism, empathy and social justice. The thematic analysis has enabled the paper to come up with three overlapping strands that comprise: pluralism and politics of inclusion, exile and ethics of belonging and gendered resistance as civic imagination. The discourse locates the Pakistani English fiction within the broader discourse of the political role of literature in the postcolonial communities suggesting that the modern writers are changing the narration process to a kind of progressive citizenship. It concludes with the suggestion that this corpus is a shift to the state less nationalism to what may be called a progressive civic imagination the literary effort to re-create collective identity on religious, ethnic, and geographic levels.*

**Keywords:** *Pakistani English Fiction; Progressive thought, Political culture, Postcolonial theory, Nationhood, Pluralism, Civic Imagination, Belonging, Social Justice, Literature and politics, Progressive Writers Movement.*

### Introduction

Postcolonial discourse has been focusing on the relationship between the literature and the nationhood. English-language fiction in South Asian fiction has been a response as well as a critique of national stories where identity, modernity and state ideology are seen to conflict. The intricate history of Pakistan which was created out of the Partition, military rule, Islamization and Globalization has offered an abundant background of authors to question the definition of belonging and the ethics of nationalism.

The paper takes Pakistani English fiction in the interdisciplinary space that relates the literary fantasy to the politics culture. The article discusses the way the tradition of progressive thinking, which is anchored on the South Asian Progressive Writers Movement of the 1930s, re-emerges through a contemporary fiction in the shape of an ethical resistance to authoritarian and isolating politics. Progressive thought in this sense is a pluralist, gender-egalitarian, secular humanist and social justice belief. Through literary representation, these concepts criticize the mainstream discourses that have attempted to define the Pakistani identity along the religious or security lines.

The chosen texts Hamid, *Exit West*, Shamsie, *Home Fire*, and Aslam, *The Golden Legend* address the following issues: displacement, the issue of citizenship, and the problem of moral responsibility. Both authors in their turn challenge the narrow conceptualizations of the nation and propose integrative conceptualization of belonging. By creating a post-national mode of

circumnavigating the globe, Hamid recreates the classical tragedy of the politics of citizenship and loyalty, and Shamsie foresees the marginalized religious communities as ethical agents of resistance, and Aslam anticipates the peripheral communities of religion to act as such in the future. They all show that fiction can be an ethical re-writing field, a literary field of negotiating cultural and political discontinuities of Pakistan.

This paper is based on the methodological approach that involves close textual analysis basing on the postcolonial theory (Anderson, Bhabha, Chatterjee), and the critical approach to the political culture (Mufti, Srivastava, Gilroy). It is thematic rather than a writer-oriented analysis since it focuses on recycling ideas and narrative devices, which uncover how literature works politically.

In the interdisciplinary approach to nationalism and progressive thought, the paper asserts that the Pakistani English fiction assists in the redefinition of the nation as not necessarily geographical or religious place but as a moral and civil community that is continually changing. This paper has put literary imagination as a kind of political engagement in the twenty first century through how these novels are empathetic, dissenting and pluralistic.

### **Literature Review**

The critical scholarship on Pakistani English fiction collected in this literature review concerns three overlapping areas (1) the history of the emergence of English-language writing in Pakistan and its relation to national identity; (2) thematic and generic inclinations of Anglophone Pakistani fiction; (3) the new focus on progressive, civic, and political imaginaries of contemporary fiction.

In these veins, the review places the contemporary paper within the broader discourse of the postcolonial literary studies and the intercultural analysis fields and concludes that there is still an unoccupied gap in the literature to fill the gap between these two areas of study: Pakistani English fiction and progressive political culture.

### ***The Nation-literature paradigm and the Pakistani English Writing evolution.***

A critique of Pakistani English literature begins with a historical report of its formation whereby it is trailed how it came to be the globalized diasporic form. The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature (2021) condenses how the English-language literature in Pakistan lapsed off the imperial traditions into the hybrid and the transnational lines, with the suggestions of the continuation in the historical framework and the postcolonial negotiation. Equally, a territorial account of how Pakistani writers responded to the socio-political developments, particularly, the Partition, the 1971 war and the post 9/11 geopolitics through a region-based analysis by Kazmi (2022), postulates that the subject of the national literary production and its formative quality was decided by the historical events.

The critical commentary however notes that there are recurring problems as far as legitimacy, readership and representation are concerned. According to a report in Herald (n.d.), the Pakistani English fiction is being enjoyed around the world, however this is not expanding its national-literary imaginaries given that it is being repetitive in most cases; Partition trauma, elite Anglophone milieus, and expatriate dislocation.

Such background surveys provide only the background required but they are likely to finish before delving into the problem of progressive political culture reflection in the literature. This is the gap that makes the study imperative in the context of which the Pakistani English fiction would be put rather than an identification-based writing but an ideological and civic exploration.

### ***General and Tropicalized Approaches to the Anglophone Fiction of Pakistan.***

The other literature dwells on thematic organization and genre constellation within the Pakistani English fiction. Indicatively, one of the research articles published in the Russian Law Journal (2020) recognizes much of this fiction as the politico-historical literature due to its high use of the statehood, history, and power theme. In the Social Works Review, Butt (2024)

qualitatively analyses via thematic analysis works related to the theme of cultural hybridity, ambivalence, and subaltern subjectivity by Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, and Nadeem Aslam.

Linguistic or corpus-based methods are used in other researches. The authors of the article (2021) in *Migration Letters* examine the Urdu-origin terms in Pakistani English fiction as they think that this fusion is a sign of an indigenized version of English that is culturally specific. Even though these studies have broadened the critical understanding of the Pakistani Anglophone fiction, they have generally concentrated on the identity, migration or hybridity against ideological or civic facet of the reformist discourse. Hajiyeva (2016) uses the same example, talking about the concept of multiculturalism and hybrid identity in Pakistani English literature, but does not extend this description to the domain of the progressive political philosophy. In this way, a gap in the analysis is created, on how political culture, the notion of nationhood, and civic ethics are conveyed and criticized in literature.

### ***The Pakistani English fiction's Progressive, Civic and Political Imaginaries.***

There is a beginning to a new body literature that perceives Pakistani English fiction as a location of political fantasy- responding to the questions of citizenship, belonging, pluralism and dissent. An interesting case study is that Khalid (2025) examines how Pakistani Anglophone writers are negotiating the global-local tensions as the war on terror is waged and situate their writing within the scopes of the world literature. These works are references to an upsurge of the feeling of political and moral investments in the contemporary fiction.

However, the ongoing critical critique of the progressive thought that can be evolved as secular, egalitarian, pluralist and socially just is still limited. Although the Progressive Writers' Movement has been a long-standing issue of study in the Urdu literature historiography (Ali, 2018; Rahman, 2019), not everyone can identify the intellectual input of this movement with the contemporary English-language fiction. Equally, within little scholarship has been conducted to decipher Pakistani English novels as a political culture text yet not as an identity literature.

This gap has been addressed in this paper by discussing how some of the Pakistani English novelists perceive the country in progressive civic imagination, which is a literary and moral paradigm with expectations of inclusiveness, justice and democratic change.

### ***Gap and Positioning of the Current Research.***

#### **In general, the literature available demonstrates that:**

The historical and identity features of Pakistani English fiction are already documented; Thematic studies of hybridity, migration and language; and have grown prolifically.

How far this literature engages itself in political culture, progressive thinking, and national imaginaries founded upon civic belonging and social justice, is not analysed in a systematic manner in a series of studies.

This paper fills in these gaps in preempting the ideological and imaginative range of literature, in this instance, how the selected Pakistani English novels re-write the idea of nationhood, citizenship and political ethics as a progressive narrative method. In this way, this study is an inclusion of theories of nation and narration (Bhabha, 1990), political culture (Almond and Verba, 1963) and progressive humanism therefore come to form a part of the interdisciplinary discourse between literary study, political theory as well as cultural history.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on the postcolonial theory, the political culture study, and the intellectual heritage on the progressive South Asian thought in order to find out how the Pakistani English fiction looks at the nation in a new way. This congruent complex of structures positions literature as a more than aesthetic or representative medium; they study it to be a kind of cultural and moral practice that intrusively intervenes in the political discourse. Expressed by

the conglomeration of these perspectives this piece of art introduces fiction as the locus of civic imagination, moral inquiry and social critique, where they are unified.

#### *Nation and Narration*

One of the leading points of departure is the idea that a nation is imagined community expressed by a writer, Benedict Anderson, (1983). Anderson thinks that the preservation of the national identity is possible through relying on similar narratives and not due to the ethnic and territorial connections. This idea puts literature at the heart of national consciousness since narrative is the process of creating belonging and history together.

Growing out of the concept of Anderson, Homi K. Bhabha (1990) extends the notion of the nation as a narration to the performative and ambivalent nature of the national identity. To Bhabha, the nation is not an object but an object of a discursive practice which is being rewritten continuously in the cultural practices that are discontinuous in time and space, and do not obey linear homogenizing histories. It is possible to consider the Pakistani setting as having this interpretive frame particularly as rival discourses around religion, modernity, and nationalism are continually produced in order to establish the boundaries of citizenship and belonging.

The works of Aamir Mufti (2007) and Neelam Srivastava (2019) have proven that postcolonial nationalism is more inclined to be based on the suppression of domestic alter-egos such as women, religious minorities, and dissenting thinkers. The literary space is thus a period of reevaluation of the inclusion and pluralism. In this regard, the Pakistani English fiction is seen as a narrative practice which re-creates the national identity, which is founded on the ethical and civic values but not on the state ideology.

#### ***The South Asian Progressive thought and Cultural Politics.***

The Progressive Writers' Movement (PWM) and its association with the political and literary events of the 1930s are the genesis of South Asian Progressive thought. Literature was given center stage as a means of social change by the PWM led by Sajjad Zaheer, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Mulk Raj Anand that was guided on the principles of socialism, secularism and humanism. Ahmed (2009) argues that the movement viewed art as a way of promoting human dignity and a fight against the colonial and feudal oppression.

Though the movement as a body had disintegrated after Partition, its echo can be still felt in the Pakistani culture. Contemporary Anglophone writers including Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and Nadeem Aslam pervert this progressive inheritance in order to react to the modern crises of globalization, religious extremism and authoritarian regimes. Their narratives reinvent the ideals of progressive justice, equality and empathy and secular humanism in the twenty-first century circumstances and hence must bridge the gap between the vision of reform of the past and the present.

That literature activity is theorized as a postcolonial public sphere by Neelam Srivastava (2012) whereby fiction as performance of civic discourse would be incorporated in the postcolonial world as a part of the public life. Within this interpretive paradigm, progressive thought is no longer regarded as a yearning reappropriation of the left as politics but an incumbent sense of direction that allows pluralism and discontinuous ways of organization of power.

#### ***Political Culture and Civic Imagination.***

The political culture theory introduced by Almond and Verba (1963) and then improved by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) associates civic behavior with the close normative and cultural values. When this is transferred to the literature, it becomes obvious, that the types of narrative forms represent the collective approach towards the government, justice and citizenship. This is an instance where fiction is one way through which societies fantasize civic existence and moral responsibility.

The postcolonial melancholy introduced by Paul Gilroy (2004) contributes to the understanding that the post-imperial societies have issues with the way of including diversity

in national discourses, and the concept of public intimacy introduced by Lauren Berlant (2011) helps to comprehend that the emotional power can affect the life of a community. Those perceptions may be applied in explaining the recurrence of empathy, care and solidarity on morality contexts in Pakistani fiction due to civic imagination.

This study describes progressive civic imagination as the narrative articulation of the feeling of collective belonging and moral responsibility that transcends religious and nationalistic identity. One may witness such imagination in the Pakistani English fiction in regard to the interfaith unity, gender resistance and the humanizing against violence. Through this kind of presentation, literature undergoes a form of moral repositioning, implying that we have these other options of citizenship, which are founded on empathy and equality.

### ***Synthesis***

Both Postcolonial theory and progressive thinking and political culture intersect gives a whole picture approach to analyzing how the meaning of nationhood has been bargained in the Pakistani English fiction. The Postcolonial theory would say how the nation is created in narratives, the progressive thought would add a vocabulary of justice and solidarity which is ethical, and the political culture theory would give the means how the literature can create the model of civic consciousness.

The proposed theoretical synthesis will allow the ongoing research to answer the question about the literary texts being the active engagement of the political culture instead of the passive reflection of the social reality. In their effort to design the formal innovation and to discover the morality, such authors as Hamid, Shamsie and Aslam help to re-design the nation as the diverse, human and morally-grounded society. Their works give an idea of how fiction can be a locus of civic pedagogy, a fictional site where the ideals of progressivism and democracy are being redefined and re-enacted.

### **Thematic Analysis:**

Finding a way to reinvent the Nation Literary and Political.

The segment tries to make a thematic analysis of the Pakistani English fiction of preference to come to terms with how the literary texts reformulate the idea of the nation within the broad cultural, political and ethical situation. This section is intended to trace the intersections between literature and political philosophy--the way fiction becomes a means of debate on the questions of collective identity, belonging and ideological conversion.

The discussion has been organized in such a manner that the three overlapping sub-sections cover a different yet conceptually related aspect of the research question to bring about analytical clarity. The first sub-section, The Nation and Pluralism, deals with how the idea of nationhood is manifested in the pluralist and multicultural practices in the context of inclusivity and negotiation of the difference. In the second sub-section, Exile, Belonging, and Ethics of Citizenship., the theme of displacement, attachment and moral responsibility is examined as the major area of re-defining the national identity. The final sub-section, the Power, Ideology and the Progressive Imagination. addresses the importance of political consciousness and reformist ideals in the vision of the country via the literary works of the social change and re-conceptualising the country as an ethical community.

Together, these three strands of themes provide a comprehensive view of how the Pakistani English fiction is not only representative of the sociopolitical situation but also participates in their reorganization. The analysis with these prisms demonstrates that the literary imagination is a significant field of expression of progressive thought and world of other forms of national belonging.

### ***The Nation and Pluralism***

The pluralism idea is dominant in Pakistani English fiction under which writers question the oppressiveness of religious nationalism, and envision more compatible forms of collective identity. In this case, the country is not an established place which is bound to religion or

geography but rather a cauldron of negotiations with various voices which attempt to adjudicate on receivability. Tacitly doubting the query of coexistence, tolerance and collective responsibility, the authors of the present time point to the exclusionary inclinations, which the political culture of Pakistan has experienced since the formation of this state.

### ***Literature of Pluralism Negotiations.***

In his book *The Golden Legend* (2017), Nadeem Aslam also puts pluralism in the framework of a authoritarian-controlled and sectarian-ridden environment of violence. However, the fictional city of Zamana as represented in the novel can be described as a microcosm of the dysfunctional polity of Pakistan. Aslam develops a story of interfaith solidarity by the life of a Christian widow named Lily and Nargis who is tortured by a personal tragedy. The friendship is a political gesture that was created out of grief and resistance to the ideological policing of religion. According to critics such as Zahoor (2023) and Hussain (2024), Aslam has made personal tragedy a civil action and presented compassion as the constituents of nation building. Even the city is in some way an allegoric construction: desecrated cathedral, the burning public library, the bridges between communities in segregating sections allude to the fragile ties between neighborhoods. The lyrical repetitive and meditative style of Aslam as descriptive is a recreation of what Mufti (2007) calls the melancholy of the postcolonial state, the feeling of mourning and survival simultaneously. But in this despondency the world of Aslam is full of the moral necessity of co-existence. The novel places the empathetic focus on Christian and Muslim women and allows them to restore the moral essence of the nation which the forces represented it to be in the periphery.

The other, but complementary, redefinition of pluralism is made in Kamila Shamsie *Home Fire* (2017). The loyalty or betrayal dichotomy is also confronted in the novel and is grounded in the view of the diaspora as a critique of the binaries of nationalist discourse. Shamsie substitutes the Sophocles *Antigone* setting with the modern Britain setting, and demonstrates a process of citizenship and belonging negotiation based on race, religion, and global war on terror. *Home Fire* shatters the idea of the state as an ethical judge, and pursues the ethical code to adhere to, scholars say, such as Aql (2024) and Ibrahim (2025), contend that these are a family code and a civic code. Shamsie locates pluralism within the moral and ethical responsibility space and not the legal legitimacy space through dramatizing the conflict between the individual conscience and the law.

Mohsin Hamad (2017) provides the concept of pluralism with a global feature in *Exit West* (2017). To achieve this porousness and fluidity of identity is his magical realism, or in other words, the use of magic to symbolize or represent the refugee cross continentally through the use of magic i.e. the doors. Such portals are viewed by critics (Jamari, 2025; ASPD, 2025) as metaphors of postnational vision of the world in which movement, migration has become natural human conditions. This absence of clear geography helps Hamid to generalize the experience of displacement and empathy, as the principle of organizing global coexistence, should replace fear. His economical writing and his non-emotional attitude reinforces this ethical position, as it makes the readers imagine a situation where unity is of higher importance than nationality.

### ***Civic Ethic of Progressive Pluralism.***

In all these writings, pluralism is not merely a thematic structure but a future civic virtue- a method of imagining the nation as a concerned society. The theocratic systems and the ethnonational systems are challenged in the way in which the authors anticipate mundane experiences of care taking in the oppressed, cross-boundary love and the non-selective grieving. Although they are domestic and personal scenes, they carry the political significance as they write that it is people who have moral power, not institutions.

The books change intimate feelings to civic feelings, and this is arguable using the idea of the public intimacy as formulated by Berlant (2011). Grief, love and empathy are transformed into

political practice of preserving community by the process of disintegration. This transformation of affect to ethics is in alignment with the tradition of South Asian progressivism that saw the literature as a tool of human solidarity. Revisioning the nation affectively, but not doctrinally, these authors subject themselves to what Gilroy (2004) refers to as a radical re-humanization of politics life.

***Winding Up: The Golden Age of Toleration to Ethical Coexistence.***

Pluralism in Pakistani English fiction is thus refocused on liberal tolerance to the vision of just co-existence on empathy and justice. Hamid generalizes the migrant experience to have a fraternity in the world, Shamsie turns citizenship to emotional responsibility, Aslam, in the persecuted and dispossessed, finds moral courage. Their inputs as one body decide what the country would be a civic and not a religious venture.

The result of this redefinition is a tremendous break of the nationalist paradigms of the past against the present study of that which it terms progressive civic imagination a literary reworking of nationhood that focuses on inclusion, equality and moral reciprocity. These fictions are not only an expression of the wish of pluralism but they are also, in fact, creating it in the shape of the stories as in the environment of the polarized political culture of Afghanistan, Pakistan.

***Exile, Belonging and the Ethics of Citizenship.***

The most popular theme of the Pakistani English fiction is exile and the theme of belonging, where the writers are in a constant state of challenge to the precarious relationship between citizenship and righteous identity. The idea of a citizen in these novels transcends the category of jurist as well as the material world to emotional, ethical, and imaginative. Exile forced and voluntary or symbolic is displaced to be the state of belonging that is put to the trial and reallocation. Having rarely been detached in a community in which nationalism has been often entangled in the spaces of exclusivity in faith and in patriarchal subjugation, the exile character provides a viewpoint through which to question the perceptions of the demarcations of the state-organized belonging and envision different civic identities.

***The Condition of Exile***

In the book *Exit West* (2017), Mohsin Hamid finds the exile in the interlude of movement, migration, and change in terms of morality. The protagonists of Hamid, Nadia and Saeed flee the country of war with uncomparable names with the help of magic doors that can be opened and opened in different locations of the world. The motif of the door disrupts the difference between the home and foreign space and signifies what Bhabha (1990) refers to as the third space of the negotiation whereby the cultural meanings are intertwined. This is why such critics as Jamari (2025) or the ASPD (2025) understand this device as the response of Hamid himself to the politics of migration in the modern world: he transforms the borders into the surreal and porous and, consequently, he makes displacement a universal human experience and not a geopolitical anomaly.

The exile in *Exit West* is not shown as a completely tragic loss but the process of moral re-orientation. The detachment for the homeland allows the migrants to form such a phenomenon as Anderson (1983) describes the so-called imagined community at the level of global context, where solidarity prevails over the national belonging. Such ambiguity of the migration can be seen in Hamid with his minimalistic approach to prose and his recurrent form of narration that makes me think of a post-colonial melancholy what Gilroy (2004) would refer to as saddening and liberating. Lastly, *Exit West* does not imply that citizenship must be grounded on the territory or religion but rather the capacity to empathize and coexist.

***Ethical Agency and Diasporic Citizenship.***

Kamila Shamsie, in *Home Fire* (2017), gives a fresh meaning of the exile through the reference to the diaspora and state surveillance. The novel is centered on Aneeka, Isma and Parvaiz all of them are British Muslims who need to balance love, loyalty, and belongingness under the

umbrella of counter-terrorism laws. Reconstituting the Antigone by Sophocles, Shamsie is acting out the problem of the moral duty and obedience to the law. Home Fire, according to scholars, such as Aql (2024) and Ibrahim (2025) shows moral contradictions of liberal democracies, which need assimilation and disapprove of the role of emotional and cultural belonging.

Shamsie narrates citizenship as a commitment of love and grief, ethical courage but not of bureaucracy. Her defiance against the state power is a moral citizenship act, founded on human sympathy, rather than the law as Aneeka goes in the attempt to repatriate the body of her brother who has joined a militant group. Through this retelling, Shamsie dismantles the antagonism of devotion and betrayal and shows the political side of family love as an inalienable right to honor. This change can be comprehended with the help of the notion of the public intimacy which was introduced by Berlant (2011): since personal emotions, love and mourning in self are the keys to civic unity and since the political acts themselves are love and mourning.

### ***Exile as Political Critique***

Exile is a state of Nadeem Aslam in *The Golden Legend*, however, it is in the internal geography of Pakistan and not in transnational displacement. His characters, through sectarian murder, state repression, are strangers in their own land. The Christian librarian, Lily and the widow with a false identity, Nargis, are symbolic of internal exile, or displacement that is brought on by persecution due to ideology ground. Remarking that the concept of domestic exile suggested by Aslam (2023) is the challenge to the idea that the sense of belonging relies on citizenship status, Zahoor (2023) and Hussain (2024) also mention that the sense of domestic exile as suggested offers a new perspective on the given issue through the lenses of citizenship status and background of a woman whose belonging to a specific ethnic group is determined by the citizenship status. Instead, he puts the moral belonging in the witness and solidarity, particularly in marginalized groups.

This effect of moral geography comes about by the narrative style of Aslam, heavy description, repetitive symbolism, and excessive intertextuality. *Zamana* proves to be an allegory of the torn nation, its institutions being corrupt means of expressing the lapse of civic faith. But in these little workings underfoot, Aslam has characters that engage in little acts of care; saving books, keeping each other safe or refusing to be quiet. Such would be these little gestures that recall the moral philosophy of the Progressive Writers Movement, and that make exile an ethical attitude, a deviation to an unreasonable arrangement of things.

### ***The Ethics of Belonging***

The issue of belonging is reinterpreted in these novels as an ethical and not juridical status. The uprooting of the main characters shows how citizenship as established by law or religion itself is inadequate. What these authors would propose instead of legalistic belonging is what can be referred to as such, ethical citizenship a sense of responsibility, which crosses national or sectarian boundaries. This concept agrees with the outlook of civic culture articulated by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) on his perception of civic culture expressed in the shared values of tolerance and autonomy in contrast to institutional obedience.

Globalism of Hamid, diasporic moral dilemma of Shamsie and inner exile of Aslam all lead to the same suggestion: it is the possibility to be empathetic and just, which is the true way to judge the nation. These novels thus perform what Srivastava (2019) calls a literary citizenship, where narrative imagination proves to be a political agency. They convert displacement into a platform, out of which they can critique authoritarianism and imagine of plural belonging in their re-invention of exile.

### ***In Conclusion: Rewriting Citizenship.***

Hamid, Shamsie and Aslam employ their imagery of exile and belonging to challenge mainstream constructions of citizenship by exclusion and control. They are either migrant or diasporic Muslims or persecuted minorities, with their personality, and are alternative civic

subjects on compassion and solidarity. The morality of citizenship in the novels goes beyond the state to form the moral society that is upheld by empathy care and justice.

Exile ceases to be a narrative of loss in this thematic trajectory, but is instead, a moral revival discourse. The Pakistani English fiction re-invents the concept of displacement in moral knowledge in redefining the notion of citizenship as a progressive and universal ideal. The given definition of civic ethics supports the focus of the research that the authors of Pakistan use fiction to demonstrate crises that the country is going through and to rebuild its moral and political possibilities.

#### ***Power, Ideology, and Progressive Imagination.***

The desire to explore power and ideology how power works, where it affects moral life, and how individuals and groups can create their agency within the coercive structures has been one of the dominant strands which connect modern Pakistani English fiction. Through their subtle descriptions of political corruption, surveillance and resistance, authors such as Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and Nadeem Aslam are able to make literature question the importance of civic duty and the nature of moral problems. This order is linked with the postcolonial public sphere that can be discovered at the work of Srivastava (2012) in which the fiction is a part of the ethical discourse that cannot be sustained in institutional politics.

#### ***Politics and power in Literature.***

The Pakistani political culture has always been marked with authoritarian rule, militarization, and manipulation of ideologies. This constant alternating between democracy and dictatorship has led to what Mufti (2007) has termed crisis of legitimacy where the moral power of the state is under constant-dispute. The disjunctions of power are usually fictionalized through allegorical or symbolic approaches to this condition that imagine the possibility of repair.

The Golden Legend is an attempt to dramatize the strength and the fear of life by Aslam. The state is diffuse in that it can be seen in the form of secret surveillance and intrusive in the form of arbitrary detention and also control of speech. But in this tyrannical order, Aslam locates the ethical integrity in the opposite location. This is among the moral rebellions by Nargis who does not succumb to political influences following the death of her husband. Her personal betrayal becomes a political protest, the insistence of the verisimilitude and its sincerity on the institutional violence. It is at such moments that critics such as Zahoor (2023) and Hussain (2024) see such scenes as a literary re-creation of the human dignity in the state of ideological oppression by Aslam.

Similarly, Home Fire (2017) by Shamsie challenges the monopolization of moral authority by the state once again through the lens of the politics of counter-terrorism as they are reflected in Meddle. Karamat Lone, the British Home Secretary, represents the ambivalences of power of liberal democracies a national security by using the policy of exclusion by an immigrant. Shamsie in his description illustrates how ideology turns fear into administration and belonging into conditional privilege. The utterly horrific end of the novel the dehumanization of the family bonds by the state power points to the privatization of morality in the context of securitized politics. The story format adopted by Shamsie where points of view are repeated, according to Aqil (2024) can be likened to the step-by-step undermining of morality in modern politics. The ideology of empathy also divides the empathy that is criticized in the building itself.

The power reflection in Exit West by Hamid is more abstract but not less incisive. Hamid erases some geographies, thus, making the process of political violence universal that is, the authoritarian regime and xenophobia are not the national peculiarities, but a global problem. The desensitized and monotonous style of the narration evokes what Gilroy (2004) terms as the melancholic civility which is a deliberate restraint of the senses and consequently, enforcement of human dignity. The reluctance of the novel to define the villains and the heroes

disturbs the dichotomous moral systems and stimulates the readers to lead the lives of ambiguity as a moral condition.

***Development by Imagination as a Moral Resistance.***

In such works progressive imagination can be viewed as some sort of moral protest against authority. It does not make progressivism a dogma but a feeling of ideology: a commitment to truth, compassion and justice under adverse circumstances. This literary transforming gives way to the ethical humanism of the Progressive Writers Movement but is now modified to the realities of the world today whereby power is diffused by surveillance and media and neoliberal economics.

The theme of civic renewal on the basis of moral courage is articulated in Aslam and his judiciousness of beauty in connection with violence, Shamsie and his moral hesitation at the modern world, and Hamid and his cosmopolitanism without words. In its own way, this activism is the introduction of conscience by these writers, which suggests that even ethical imagination is political resistance. Their heroes are architects, brothers, refugees, whose authority is not traditionally held, and of which Berlant (2011) writes are thought to possess what she refers to as ordinariness affect, in which ordinariness decency can be given new meaning.

The fatalism which is often pervasive of the image of Pakistan in the international discourse is also criticized in the progressive fantasy of these works. This is not giving up hope, but a desperate one, proposed by these novels, not on the basis of institutions but instead on human relationships and acts of conscience. By doing so, they replicate the notion of moral choice in the order of things oppressive, and turn literature into a civic school, where the readers are invited to reconsider the connection between morality and the state.

***To a Reconstruction of the Nation on Moral Grounds.***

The challenge of domination is overcome by the Pakistani English fiction restoring the moral foundation of the national project. These authors are opposed to the cynicism that pits politics with regard to survival but rather they posit that there exists a possibility of moral agency. According to their stories, reform cannot be achieved fundamentally through revolution, ideology, but through building empathy, truth and solidarity in the daily life.

Such a moral reconstitution of the nation is the fact that the authors Inglehart and Welzel (2005) refer to as emergence of so-called self-expressive values of civic culture, the values that place human dignity and freedom and rational debate over obedience. These values, in literature, are embodied in the form of narrative empathy, polyphonic form and the imposition of personal conscience.

The progressive imagination, so expounded in these works, therefore, plays a twofold part, in that it accuses the abuses of power but then it envisages a more human political culture. In case the ethical perception is transformed into the narrative form, the Pakistani English fiction becomes the place where the idea of the nation is re-conceived continuously as an inconclusive moral project.

***Conclusion: Literary Literary Ethical Agency.***

In exploring the nexus of power and moral imagination, these novels repeat the significance of literature as a moral instrument in the communal field. They show that aesthetic production is able to expose the workings of domination without pretending to hopelessness, and that narratives represent some of the most effective means of civic renewal.

Working with power, as well as with ideology, Hamid, Shamsie and Aslam find fiction as a tool of progressive thought - as a type of cultural practice that projects the personal conscience into the social one. They are a part of the progressive civic imagination that is the focus of this paper, where the idea of Pakistan is not simply imitated but rather recreated as open fair and morally upright society.

## Conclusion

The analysis of modern Pakistani English fiction has revealed that literary imagination remains among the important spheres of re-examination of the moral and political values of the nation. Progressive Thought is not an ideology as it is inherited but rather an ethical type of civic reflection explored by such authors as Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, and Nadeem Aslam. They defy authority, religious intolerance and exclusivism, and propose in its place plurality of moral imagination founded on compassion, fairness and coexistence.

The idea of the nation is addressed in all the discussed novels, as a negotiated construct, which is in contention, yet very dynamic as the location of the interactions between memory, ethics and power. In *Exit West*, Hamid reorganizes the displacement as the universal state, which embraces international cohesion. *Home Fire* by Shamsie brings out irregularities of citizenship and belonging in securitized democracies, as well as reinvents emotion as the building block of a moral agency. *The Golden Legend* by Aslam questions the morality of the totalitarian and sectarian bloodshed and seeks salvation in the mercies and integrity. It is all these stories that this paper is referring to as a progressive civic imagination a literary reworking of nationhood that cuts across not only religious, but also ethnic, geopolitical boundaries.

This civic imagination of development works on three levels, which are interconnected. Firstly, it is a narrative practice, which assists the authors to reconstruct the symbolic system of the nation. They are diverse and affirmative to heterogeneity via allegory, polyphonic form. Second, it is a moral philosophy, secular humanism and moral imperative of the individual. Thirdly it is a civic pedagogy, a model of exemplifying modes of coexistence and empathy, which forestall the hierarchies of power already in place. When these dimensions are compounded, a Pakistani English fiction transforms the story telling process to a kind of political participation.

The study also confirms that the literature and postcolonial literature, in particular, continues to be utilized as a cultural criticism of the power and the way of restoration of moral values. The experience of engaging with the progressive traditions and the contemporary crises has created a canon of work that transcends the art and activism dichotomy in these authors. Their fiction demonstrates the way that moral imagination that is projected on the narrative, character, and form can be shaped as a sort of protest against political stalemate and ideological single-mindedness.

Also, this research contextualizes the Pakistani English fiction within the problems of postnationalism and immigration and civil ethics in the world. Even though these stories are rooted in the specific situation of the Pakistan sociopolitics, the moral or humanistic concerns are experienced beyond the boundaries of the country. In that sense, the Pakistani English fiction is a good representation of what Srivastava (2019) regards as the so-called transcultural moral imagination, in which a literature acts as an intermediary between local trauma and awareness of the world.

The results of the article indicate that interdisciplinary scholarship has many implications. First, they re-awaken the imperative to read literature as a sort of political culture- as a seat of civic values being expressed, criticized and redefined. Second, they suggest that the progressive tradition of South Asia remains under development, and it is embedded in English-language fiction, which can not only appeal to the international readership, but also retain the local feeling of an urgent ethics. Finally, they demonstrate the truth that interdisciplinary approaches including the use of postcolonial theory, political thought, and cultural theory are capable of yielding the finding of the impact of narrative organization upon civic significance.

In conclusion, the contemporary Pakistani English fiction constructs the image of the country as rather the heritage than the ethical business. It is in protest against opposites of faith and nation, the insider and the exile, the power and the submission by progressive thinking and moral imagination. Instead, it visualizes community as a dialogic, open and caring enterprise.

By so doing, these authors render literature a civic hope, one that is in a continual reminder of the fact that the imagination remains central to the task of justice and the renewal of collective life.

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