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Histories and Historiography: Problem of National History in *Äg kā Daryā*

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Abstract. Qurratulain Hyder in *Äg kā Daryā* challenged the historical narrative constructed by colonial powers. In the post-colonial era, the history of the languages of the nation-states (of India and Pakistan) was Orientalist in nature. Modern history has challenged the continuity of poetry tradition and forms and genres used to convey the past. This modern way of writing history is being questioned by Hyder through *Äg kā Daryā*, interestingly through modern novel (Prose) form, which also defines Urdu's post-colonial novel form's strength and comprehensiveness in the World literature's debate context. This new historiography does not address problems of origin, nor does it question pre-colonial methods of recording history and the significance of this history for culture, society, and civilization. As an Urdu writer, Hyder becomes problematic for the national culture of India and Pakistan, as Urdu lends itself to both nations' historical and cultural identities. Hyder wrote in "high Urdu" (but not Arabicized Urdu). This language already posed a challenge for India and Pakistan when they emerged as new nations, and even writing Hindu and Buddhist religious texts in the Urdu novel became problematic. Hyder also rightly described Urdu as the language of exile. This Article broadly addresses the question of historiography, modernity, Urdu language, culture and civilization.

Keywords. Qurratulain Hyder, *Äg kā Daryā*, Histories and Historiography, Urdu Historiography, Historism, Modernity, Urdu Civilization, Nation-State

From the modern nationalist point of view, one looks at the popular historical narratives from Sind or Hind, to label/fix them as part of a pure, ancient and the grand Indian civilization, spanning across geographical territories, part of a historical synthesis through different epochs. This

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question of roots, time and purity in the context of civilization and history and its representation acquired prominence during the nineteenth century, when colonialism was at its peak. This fixation started in the west as Auerbach mentions in the introduction to his essay "Vico and Aesthetic Historism":

> Before the sixteenth century, the historical and geographical horizon of the Europeans was not large enough for such conceptions; and even in the Renaissance, the seventeenth, and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the first moves toward historism were overbalanced by currents which worked against it; especially by the admiration of Greek and Roman civilization, which focused the attention on classical art and poetry; these became models to be imitated, and nothing is more contrary to aesthetic historism than imitation of models. It promotes absolute standards and rules of beauty, and creates an aesthetic dogmatism such as was admirably achieved by the French civilization of the time of Louis XIV (Auerbach 184).

When this aesthetic dogmatism, as Auerbach notes, moves towards the East it becomes Orientalism - which tries to fix culture, literature and languages as well as manufacture separate histories; and these methods are related to new conceptual and nationalistic understandings of civilization, and orientalism and nationalism come to function as two sides of the same coin. In contemporary times, popularly called the post-colonial era, a thinker who follows Orientalism is rarely acknowledged as an Orientalist. An example of this continuity of thought is in the circle of comparative literature. Sisir Kumar Das, in A History of Indian Literature (1991), lays emphasis on the universality of Sanskrit and English language and asserts that the source of almost all languages can be traced back to these two languages. He also defends the idea of Bharatvarsha and says that this conception of "a multi-ethnic country known as Bharatvarsha....is not only associated with ancient or Hindu India. This continued in the medieval period as well. Shankar Dev, the great Assamese poet, for example, invoked the idea of India—*dhanya dhanya bhartvarsha* —as a unified culture zone. The idea was shared by the great Muslim thinkers too. Amir Khusrau wrote a *Masnavi* known as *Nuh Sipihr* (Nine Skies) around 1318" (Das 1991: 5). He calls ancient India a Hindu India, but does not call the medieval period a Muslim period but just the medieval era. Secondly, he calls Shankar Dev an "Assamese" poet but calls Amir Khusrau a "Muslim poet", marking him out as an outsider (a stance which is the bedrock of nationalism) who upheld the idea of a "unified culture zone". In the history of Indian literature, anyone can contribute but his or her identity will continue to be marked and represented according to nationalistic values.

This paper's focus is primarily on two aspects that deal with how the novel I look at - *Äg kā Daryā* - is different when it's tackling the question of nationalism and Orientalism at the heyday of nationalism as well as how it deals with representation of history writing. As an Urdu novel, *Äg ka Daryā*'s response to the nation-state and how it influences the condition of the novel

along with the question of whether this novel is a work of non-orientalist thinking or just a piece of work representing Orientalist thinking is something I look at.

Aijaz Ahmed argues that "Qurratulain Hyder...makes a narrative choice of the nationalist and even romantic kind, which we may generically designate as 'Nehruvian'. Within this ideological structure, then, Kamal's choice – to go to Pakistan – can be seen as a betrayal" (*Jameson's Rhetoric* 10). However, if we deeply examine the entire characterization of Kamal who is one of the leading characters, his portrait in pre-partition and post partitioned India is different from the nationalist (Nehruvian) position and a sharp critique of nationalist perspectives. Kamal's leaving for Pakistan is not just his betrayal, but a comprehensive critique of the foundation of nationalism, and it's a betrayal of nationalism. Before the creation of Pakistan, Kamal is described as a very enthusiastic worker of the Indian National Congress (INC). Champa Ahmed criticizes his ideological and political view on multiple occasions, in debate, and several times she taunts and warns him. Champa Ahmed has her own ideological stand which is not foregrounded; her resistance comes across with some of her personal background which is mystical. Kamal's engagement with the freedom movement as an INC worker, is described in the novel:

> کمال کو اپنے بچپن کا زمانہ بڑے واضح طور پر یاد تھا جب وہ گھر میں بڑوں سے سیاست کے تذکرے سنتا۔... پٹنے والے ماموں بھی کانگریسی تھے اور آئے دن جیل جاتے رہتے تھے۔۔ کمال کو ترک موالات کا زمانہ یاد تھا جب پٹنے والے ماموں اسے اپنے ساتھ جلسوں میں لے جاتے اور وہ بڑے جوش و خروش سے اسٹیج پر کھڑے ہو کر اپنی توتلی زبان میں قومی نظمیں پڑھتا(Hyder 311) ۔
>
> [Kamal had a very clear memory of his childhood when he used to listen to political discussions by his elders at home.... the uncle from Patna was also a Congressi and would frequently visit the prison, Kamal remembered the time of the non-cooperation movement when his uncle from Patna would take him along for political gatherings and he would stand on stage, full of enthusiasm, and read nationalist poems in his stuttering voice.][i]

Kamal grew up in the political and nationalist environment, where he was an ardent nationalist since childhood.[ii] Apart from Kamal's association with the Indian National Congress, we see the engagement of children in the nationalist movement[iii], as he was born and brought up in an upper middle-class Muslim family, who were very politically active. Kamal's continuity with the national movement remains till late in his life. Kamal and Champa's debate around nationalism plays out like this:

> "تم بڑے پکے نیشنلسٹ ہو کمال؟" چمپا نے خائف ہو کر پوچھا۔
>
> "ہاں، ہر ایماندار اور ضمیر پرست انسان نیشنلسٹ ہو گا۔ کیا وجہ ہے کہ ملک کے اکثر مسلمان انٹلکچوئل قوم پرست

ہیں؟ کیا وہ سب ضمیر فروش ہیں؟ کانگریس نے ان کو رشوت دے رکھی ہے؟ خدا کے غضب سے ڈرو چمپا باجی۔...اس نے ٹہلتے ٹہلتے رک کر کہا، "تمہارے نزدیک سیاست صرف شہروں کی سیاست ہے، تم دیہات سے واقف نہیں"(351)۔

["You are a very determined nationalist Kamal?" ...Champa said timidly. "Yes, every honest and conscientious listener would be nationalist. What other reason is there that mostly all intellectual Muslims are nationalist? Do all of them not have a conscience? Has Congress bribed them? Be scared of God's might Champa baji." He stopped in the middle of his stroll and said, "The politics of your proximity is only the politics of cities, you are not aware of rural affairs..."]

Champa is depicted as a character who is against the idea of nationalism and the nationalist agenda and views its ideology as extremely harmful. But her own personal ideology is mysterious and not entirely revealed in the novel. Kamal, on the other hand, is full of nationalist enthusiasm, convinced that nationalism is the only way of getting out of the problem of colonialism as well as a solution for rural India, since nationalists know what is the best about them and for them. But after the creation of Pakistan, this is what transpires:

"کون ہے"؟ اندر سے آواز آئی۔
مایوسی اور ڈپریشن کی وجہ سے کمال کے حلق سے آواز بھی نہ نکلی۔
"کون ہے"؟...
"میں ہوں"۔
"گے کیا بات ہوئی۔ اے نام تو بتاؤ بھیے"۔
"میں ہوں، کمال رضا۔ پاکستان سے آیا ہوں"۔(611)

["Who is there?" Came the voice from inside. Due to despair and depression Kamal's voice did not leave his throat, "Who is there?" ... "It is me." "What kind of talk is this? At least say your name Bhaiyye."[iv] "It is me Kamal Raza, I have come from Pakistan."]

Kamal, who is now living in Pakistan, comes to India to bring back his remaining possessions and meet his relatives. He is disappointed and depressed, and Ahmed (*In the Mirror* 8) rightly diagnoses him as someone who has "nowhere to go". Rather than going into the psychology of this condition, "nowhere to go" can also be interpreted as Lukács' concept of "transcendental homelessness" as discussed in the first chapter. Ahmed is keen to mark this as a nationalist and romantic novel. But the other interpretation of Kamal's state is unveiling of the shallowness of the nationalist ideology – an ideology which divided the subcontinent. Kamal's

decision about either going to Pakistan or not is less important to the problematic of nationalism, but what Hyder is clearly describing is the shallowness of nationalism through the characterization of Kamal.

In the same story, another key character, Champa Ahmed, and the motif of the journey, are important for this discussion. Champa is described as neither happy nor sad but she is characterized as having an inner peace and shows readiness to live with memory, and other challenges. After Partition, when Kamal travels from Pakistan to Moradabad to meet her, she is characterized as an incarnation. Partition has happened, and the description of her re-entry is cinematic, the writing style takes on the perspective of a camera eye, taking us inside her mind, and displaying various aspects of the character and her surroundings, which reveal a lot about the past and present. When finally, the character appears, the narrative describes it as follows:

> انگنائی میں انیٹوں کا فرش تھا۔ دیوار کے ساتھ کیاری میں کسی زمانے میں پودے رہے ہوں گے۔ اب وہ ویران پڑی تھی۔ باورچی خانے کے سامنے مرغیوں کا ڈربہ تھا۔ مرغیوں کے پر ادھر ادھر اڑ رہے تھے۔ سامنے بڑا دالان تھا۔ دالان میں تخت، اس پر چمپا بیٹھی تھی (611)۔
>
> "تم سوچ رہے ہو"، اس نے آہستہ سے کہا، کہ اب میرے دوار کون آئے گا۔ لیکن، کمال میں سمجھتی ہوں، جہاں تک ذاتی کامیابی کا سوال ہے، میں تم سے کہیں زیادہ خوش قسمت ہوں۔ میں نے سراغ پالیا ہے (617)۔
>
> [The courtyard had a brick floor. With the wall there were small a raised border of bricks. There must have been plants once. Now this was a desolate area. At the front of kitchen there was a cage for hens. The feathers of the chicken were floating here and there, in the front there was a big veranda. There was a big wood bench in veranda on which Champa sat. .... Champa remained seated at the threshold. "You are wondering," she said slowly, "who will come to my door now, but Kamal I think that, as far as the question of personal success is concerned, I find myself much luckier than you. I have found a clue, a secret".]

Champa, the one who critiqued nationalism, displays an inner love for the land, which is impossible to describe, as it is very subjective and involves the individual's memories (past) and associations based on those memories. Ultimately the trajectories of these two leading characters challenge and problematize the idea of nationalism as Kamal, a firm nationalist, remains in a dilemma, and Champa, the critic of the nationalist project and its ideology, remains in her homeland with her ambiguous ideology.

Aijaz Ahmed (8) has noted the following about Frederic Jameson in his essay "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'":

> I have said already that if one believes in the Three worlds Theory, hence in a "third world" defined exclusively in terms of

> "the experience of colonialism and imperialism," then the primary ideological formation available to a leftwing intellectual shall be that of nationalism; it will then be possible to assert, surely with very considerable exaggeration but nonetheless, that "all third-world texts are necessarily... national allegories". This exclusive emphasis on the nationalist ideology is there even in the opening paragraph of Jameson's text where the only choice for the "third world" is said to be between its "nationalisms" and a "global American postmodernist culture." Is there no other choice? Could not one join the "second world," for example? There used to be, in the Marxist discourse, a thing called socialist and/or communist culture which was neither nationalist nor postmodernist. Has that vanished from our discourse altogether, even as the name of a desire?

Here Ahmed is giving the option of a third ideology of Marxism/ socialism other than nationalism and postmodernism. However, Ahmed is uncritical of Marxism which has a similar age as nationalism and has been just as devastating as nationalism. What *Äg kā Daryā* has to say about this, is to provide options. In Pakistan, Kamal does not become Marxist/Socialist which is the third of option, which Ahmed says we need to think about. The point here is that Ahmed argues that *Äg kā Daryā* is a nationalist text, but critiques Jameson's theory, which is that "all third-world texts are necessarily... national allegories". Ahmed shows a double standard here. On the one hand he critiques Jameson and on the other, he rejects the important text *Äg ka Daryā*, which is one of the most significant texts of the subcontinent or in Jameson's words, the Third World. My argument is that this novel is neither a national allegory or "Nehruvian" nor a nationalist or romantic novel as Ahmed suggests (Ahmed 1993: 10).

In the second part of *Äg ka Daryā*, (which refers to the Islamic as well as Bhakti era) Kamaluddin, who is identified as Baghdadi and Jaunpuri, who loves the Tanpura and wears *tehbaṉd*, emerges in the colours of Jaunpur. Kamaluddin's identity has many layers and dynamics; it provides the understanding of identity -- that it is something which by nature of pre-modern civilization is flexible, rather than rigid and constant. This depiction of identity is clearly problematic for the political ideologies, especially overtly political and party and institutions centric thinking. The Indian Progressive Writers' Association wanted to see writing in particular ways, and Ahmed belongs to this group too. Kamaluddin's identity is that of a musician, an Arab/Baghdadi, a lover of history, a Jaunpuri, a farmer, and in the end, a simple villager. One can also draw a comparison between his nature and the nature of civilization (not modern or nationalist). In fact, it is completely different from the Nehruvian or nationalist perspective, which sees civilisation from the axis of purity. Instead, in him we see the coexistence of the civilizations of Bagdad and Jaunpur. This disturbs the very basic idea of

nationalism which is based on and survives on "othering" and creating new identities.

Champak's characterization at the end of the first part is as follows: Gautam sees her in the theatre with a child as she has gotten married due to the loss of her province and capture by the Mauryans. She got married to Chanakya's associate. Champak also saw Gautam, and sent a message asking whether he would like to meet her before leaving this place. Gautam replies that she is married now and for a married woman all men are like shadows. Champak sends a reply, asking what he knows about the meaning of being married (109-111). The crux of this conversation is that for Champak, marriage is not that which happens due to social obligation and customs, but something else, which Champak does not define. It remains in background, but some deep spiritual love is there for sure.

When Baghdad and Jaunpur's Kamaluddin proposes to Champa, she says: مگر ہم تم کو یوں ہی اپنا پتی مانتے ہیں۔ ["I consider you my husband already"]. "Yuṉ hi" can have many meanings, such as: already, without any formality, by heart; in this context, these become divine words, which require no explanation, no need for rationalization. Kamaluddin says: وہ کیسے؟ میرا تم سے بیاہ کہاں ہوا ہے؟ ["How come? When did I marry you?"]. To which Champa replies اس سے کیا ہوتا ہے؟ ["How does it matter?"]. She keeps laughing: ہم تو تم کو اپنا مالک خیال کرتے ہیں۔ ہمارا اور تمہارا تو جنم جنم کا ساتھ ہے۔ (141) ["I consider you my lord... our togetherness has existed since ages"]. Champa's role is about defining love, and the history of love, or the history of love from the woman's perspective. Kumkum Sangari examines *Äg kā Daryā* in the context of love and history and notes:

> Indian male reformist fiction also readily transformed transgressive loves into parables of renunciation and sublimation and resolved patriarchal contradictions with the death of the heroine. River of Fire measures a determined distance from these forms of male tutelage as well as from the self-sacrificing women and compromises of sentimental Bengali fiction. The millennial timespan puts the preoccupation with thwarted love in a different register, and allows the novel to break out of the cloying domestic frames of reformist fiction (279).

Similar renunciation we see in writer and director Sagar Sarhadi's iconic and critical film, which is significant for the Urdu classical ghazals in conte Bāzār (1982), in which Supriya Pathak as Shabnam and one of the female protagonists of the narrative, sacrifices her life, when she is forced to get married to a middle-aged rich man, not her lover. Another, a recent example is Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film Padmaavat based on the sixteenth-century Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Awadhi epic poem Padmavat, in which, the

heroine Padmavati prefers to commit jauhar, rather than submit to the ruler Khilji.

Ag kā Daryā sets a different tradition, and one of the reasons can be that it is written by a woman, who is aware and critical about the history of her culture and politics of her time. As Sangari further adds:

> In Hyder's novel, even if it ends in bitter disappointment, love remains an act of male and female agency; this agency exercised in choice and in the pain of separation is more resonant than a conjugal denouement. This is partly because the Champa characters take shape under the shadow of the great medieval romances where women - Sassi, Hir, Sohni, Sahiban - had a greater agency but became emblems of viraha and tragic love. Women in medieval romances may well have been more active in expressing desire precisely because of the crossover from material to spiritual love, and because the romance was bound to fail. Love here was transgressive and implied renunciation of family ties, status, wealth et al. – it became a form of "purification" because it was free from internal ambivalence and only subject to external constraint. Since marriage implied worldliness and hierarchy, and was an institution that maintained class, caste and religious boundaries, love and marriage were seldom coterminous: a happy ending would merely fold love back into these hierarchies. If love was not the norm for marriage, then romance had to be blocked from translating into marriage, perhaps to preserve its transgressive and/or its spiritual potentials (279).

Champak's response to Gautam, in the first story, is her questioning of Gautam's views on marriage. Religion and customs are all there is to it. Similarly, in the second story Champa says that their love or marriage has existed since the ages. This also suggests the possibility of a civilizational connection and understanding of love which is not related to the specific time and different from how the popular novel inspired by modernity depicts love.

Kamaluddin has been in Jaunpur but the way he lives here -- his divine love and association and connection to his civilization and to another civilization, the civilization of the Arab and Indian subcontinent or that of Baghdad and Jaunpur, which connects through love, and appears to have been there for ages. Time works for Champa in many temporalities, as her perception of time is not fixed, her understanding of marriage is not socially constructed. She considers it as a relationship between souls that continues through the ages. She doesn't see time and love (human value) only in terms of the present.

Sangari's description of love, defined as it is against the self-sacrificing women and compromises of sentimental Bengali fiction, emphasises Hyder's

representation of separation or *viraha* and its importance in love and making love spiritual rather than customary like marriage. Sangari sees it as a continuity of the history of the Bhakti period and its conception of love. It reflects on Mira, one of the leading figures of Bhakti, who considered marriage as just a customary thing which has nothing to do with love or may be against love:

> Mira ignores the claims of suhag. Like Mahadeviyakka who sang, "Take these husbands who die, /decay, and feed them/ to your kitchen fires" Mira designates jag suhag or marriage with a mortal as mithya or useless and illusory: tum hi jhuthe ham hi jhuthe jhutha hai sab sansaara stri purush ke sambandh jhuthe, to phuthya haiya tumhaara (5).

Sangari's point is related to the history of love, and continuity of the history of love, Champak, Champavati and Champa Ahmed's conception of love, and how Hyder depicts this through individual experiences and an understanding emerging from those experiences of history and divinity. Here one can again look at Auerbach's description of Vico's ideas about history:

> These men conceived history, not as a series of exterior facts and conscious actions of men, not as a series of mistakes and frauds, but as a subconscious, slow, and organic evolution of "forces," which were considered as manifestations of the Divinity. They admired the variety of historical forms as the realization of the infinite variety of the divine spirit, manifesting itself through the genius of the various peoples and periods. The divinization of history led to enthusiastic research into the individual historical and aesthetic forms, to the attempt to understand them all by their own individual conditions of growth and development, to a contemptuous rejection of all aesthetic systems based on absolute and rationalistic standards (186).

Vico's conceptual understanding of history was ignored during the Enlightenment and the centuries that came after, due to what Auerbach calls the aesthetic dogmatism of modernity. Hyder's manifestation of the three Champak/s and Champa Jaan in the third part is significant. Hyder portrays Champa Jaan along the lines of the courtesan Umrao Jaan Ada, a protagonist from Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa's novel (1899). Another work of importance here is *Guzashta Lakhnau* written by Abdul Halim Sharar, who was looked at in the first chapter. This novel portrays the culture of Lucknow before the Ghadar or revolt of 1857. Sharar, Ruswa and Hyder look at the same historical era and its situation in Lucknow. Hyder draws from Umrao Jaan Ada are the cultural aspects of shareef's culture and completely excluding the moral judgements. As Sangari says, "Like Umrao Jan who praises married women near the end of the novel, Champa Jan envies married women. However, she does not turn into the repentant courtesan of male reformist

fiction" (264-265). Champa Jaan is as pleased of her decisions as she is of her profession. Champa goes through a drastic transformation from courtesan to beggar, she also sees the devastation of her beloved Lucknow.

Hyder's, depiction of love in various epochs can be related to the understanding of the histories of love in Vico's terms as he mentions a subconscious, slow and organic evolution of "forces," as manifestation of divinity. In the characters of the multiple Champas in *Ägg kā Daryā* we see a metaphorical signification of India as a woman. But these characters also help break the perception of Bharat Mata, as a personification of religiosity, piety and motherhood. Aijaz Ahmed claimed that in *Ägg kā Daryā* we see the creation of another Nehruvian history, but the Champak, Champa, Champa Bai, Champa Ahmed of *Ägg kā Daryā* actively undermine Nehru's idea of Bharat Mata in Discovery of India. They perform several roles: a member of the royal family, a *tawaif*, bagger, and critic of social institutions like marriage, and an anti-Indian National Congress person who also critiques the ideology of nationalism and at the same time considers going to Pakistan a moral defeat.

In the second and last part of this chapter, I want to look at ideas of civilization through Auerbach's representations of reality and examine its relation to Lukács's idea of "transcendental homelessness", to problematize the question of literary history with reference to *Ägg kā Daryā*. As discussed in the first chapter, the novel form, like its predecessors, presents a protagonist who more often than not isn't just a 'common man', much like Odysseus in the Homeric tradition; but with a subtle but significant difference, to be found in the absence of a cyclic journey and the exclusion of a final hero's welcome. Protagonists are not bound to a particular soil; they are seemingly wanderers of wildernesses. In *Ägg kā Daryā*, Harishankar is a critical character who is a companion of Gautam and Kamal in all four parts. He keeps coming up in the narrative, like the time in the first part where Gautam encounters him after Champak has asked him the meaning of marriage or when he meets Kamal after he has left for Pakistan and comes back to India for a while filled with desolation, having no clue about life. A close portrait would be Isaac in the Old Testament, where he is guided by divine speech (background voices). But because this is a novel, we instead have protagonists whose path is paved from the conviction that informs thoughts and courage that inherently exists, in the absence of God in the background.

Lukács, in his *Theory of the Novel*, defines the novel as the form of "transcendental homelessness". In order to define transcendental homelessness, the character's state of mind, Lukács says, "is only a projection of man's experience of his self-made environment as a prison instead of as a parental home." Further, the world of the novel is the world of the prison, which is "transcendental homelessness" (19). The man has lost his parental home, he is floating here and there, there is no end to it, there is no completeness, no return to home or to past, and this lost home is at the level of soul, the meaning of "transcendental" has been changed now, and hence

the novel embodies "transcendental homelessness".

Lukács also describes the relationship between content and soul. In the novel's content, we find the main characters wandering, searching for things which they never find. "The novel tells of the adventure of interiority; the content of the novel is the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and tested by them, and by proving itself, to find its own essence" (2000: 204). Content, as Lukács mentions, is the soul, and soul is a wanderer, so it does not matter what epoch the novel represents – the Mauryans or the modern era. And in terms of content, it does not matter whether it is lyrical or prosaic; as long as it is part of the novel, the content signifies "transcendental homelessness".

Here I want to introduce examples mostly of the lyrical, and a few philosophical, dialogues of the characters. The novel starts with T.S. Eliot's famous poem, where the key words include *Daryā* (river), time, Krishna and endlessness *(mustaqil)*. We see characters of *Mahabharata*, which is considered as an epic as well as a religious text. To go back to the argument of Auerbach, we find here something similar to the amalgamation of the epic and the biblical and its cross-cultural and artistic transaction.

لوگ بدل جاتے ہیں۔ مسکراتے بھی ہیں مگر کرب موجود رہتا ہے
لاشوں اور خس و خاشاک کو اپنی موجوں میں بہاتے ہوئے دریا کی مانند
وقت جو تباہ کن ہے، قائم بھی رکھتا ہے۔(11)

تم، جو گھاٹ پر اترو گے اور
تم، جن کے جسم سمندر کے فیصلے سہیں گے
یا جو کچھ بھی تم پر بیتے گی، یہ تمہاری منزل ہے۔
کرشن نے ارجن سے میدان جنگ میں کہا:
الوداع، نہیں۔ بلکہ۔۔۔ آگے بڑھو
مسافرو!(12)

This is modern verse and T.S. Eliot (18) is a modernist poet. In this we see the non-cyclical, or incomplete quality of modernist narrative. We find that characters from the epics are part of this poem but their characteristics have changed in the form of the novel. Words like *maujūd, bahnā, qāyim, musāfiroṉ* (voyagers) indicate incompleteness and continuity, or a sense of endlessness. The following lines are a part of a few philosophical debates on the Mauryan Empire. Here, lyrical examples have not been taken because Hyder talks about active poetic culture before and during the Mauryan empire but has not mentioned it in the form of the lyric, though there was an active culture of writing poetry as Hyder mentions in the novel and it was debated between Gautam, Harishankar and Champak.

Harishankar is reincarnated in every epoch, like the other leading characters of the novel. He asks Gautam Nilambar, one of the protagonists:

"تمہاری زندگی کا مقصد کیا ہے، گوتم نیلمبر۔۔۔؟"

"تم بھی اس اندھیارے میں سے نمودار ہو کر مجھ سے یہی سوال کرنے آئے ہو۔۔۔؟"(20)

["...What is the objective of your life, Gautam Nilambar?"

"You also emerge out of this darkness to ask this question?"]

"تم یہیں کے رہنے والے ہو اور اب بھکشو بنے اجنبیوں کی طرح گھوم رہے ہو۔"

"ہم سب ایک دوسرے کے لیے ازلی اور ابدی اجنبی ہیں۔"(20)

[You are a local, yet you are wandering like a monk and stranger."

"We all are strangers to each other since timelessness".]

The philosophical debates are not complete; they are mostly about confusions. The main characters mostly choose poetry which is related to the concept of "transcendental homelessness" and their meaning appears in that context irrespective of the time period they portray. Similarly, the novel is the space of literary history or more precisely lyrical history, and in *Äg ka Daryā*, we are given us details of different kinds of bhakti poetry, for example with Hyder mentioning the following about Kamaluddin:اب بھی وہ دن بھر برآمدے میں بیٹھا مرشدی اور معرفتی نغمے لکھتا اور گاتا۔ (164) ["Even now he sits the entire day in the verandah and writes a musical praising sounds or tones on his master/mentor and mysterious knowledge."]

This can be understood as Kamaluddin living in the Bhakti era and composing *murshidi* (in the praise of master/guide) and *ma'arfatī* (mystical) tunes and sounds. This also tells us that Bhakti era songs deeply associated with *pir-murid silsila* (mentor- disciple order/tradition; *Chishtī, Qādrī,* and *Suhrawardī* are the popular orders in the subcontinent)[v]. For example, all the songs bearing Kabir's name were not necessarily written by Kabir the historical person. Many people were writing about Kabir by adding Kabir's name at the beginning or end *(kahat kabīr)* of their poems. Even years after years Kabir's death people kept writing songs with his reference. And Kamaluddin is a historical example of that kind of lyrical tradition. Copyright or authorship claims are not a historical part of pre-modern poetic and literary traditions.

The following are examples of how different the lyrical tradition is as described by Hyder, which continues today too. The lyrics can be accommodated and prove relevant for any age, as they work in multiple temporalities. The following lyrics come from a different tradition:

کوئل کی آواز سے راہی کو تکلیف پہنچتی ہے۔
ان مسرتوں کا رنج جو حاصل نہ ہوئیں۔

ان سیاحتوں کا رنج جو کی نہ جا سکیں۔
ان محنتوں کا رنج جن کا کوئی نتیجہ نہ نکلا۔
اور مسرتوں کے باوجود
مسرت میں کرب چھپا ہے کیونکہ کرب پیہم ہے۔(146)

[The call of the Cuckoo, becomes painful for the voyager
Pain for that happiness which has never been received
Pain of those voyages which could not happen
Pain of the hard work which was not fruitful
And in spite of happiness
There is pain inside the happiness because pain is continuous.]

لکڑی جل کوئلہ بھئی، کوئلہ جل بھئی راکھ
میں برہن ایسی جلی نہ کوئلہ بھئی نہ راکھ(545)

[After fire, wood becomes coal and coal becomes ashes
From me, a lonely lover, fire brings nothing.]

In all these verses, we see the continuity of pain, waiting, and dialogue with God, and the desire to reach one's roots and home. The pain is a part of life and cannot be captured in a particular frame of time, which literary historical writing does. Doing that is also framing the emotion and senses in a particular time.

Literary historiography is deeply an academic and political act. When Saxena, Shaista Suhrawardy, and Sadiq were writing about the history of Urdu literature their focus was on language, clarity, easy flowing sentences, the smoothness of style and structure. These were all the parameters decided by the Orientalists, creating a linear taste and choices, rather than looking at the taste and choices people already have. The kind of poetry we encounter in *Ág kā Daryā* indicates how literature was practiced, in multiple languages.

According to the conventions of national history, which were introduced by the colonial state, literary histories were written like *A History of Urdu Literature* by Ram Babu Saxena and Mohammad Sadiq -- a colonial and post-colonial book respectively -- and *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas* [History of Hindi Literature] (1929) by Ramchandra Shukla. *Ág kā Daryā* is a novel which gives us a form of literary history that does not present the Indian lyrical tradition chronologically. An orientalist-nationalist literary history defines history according to languages. *Ág kā Daryā* gives us a history of literature without talking about the binaries of languages and their respective literary histories. The novel is also the history of Indian literature which covers Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, Awadhi, Braj bhasha, English and Bengali. Vico uses the term history of human nature, when referring to the history of literature. In Hyder's novel, we find a history of the nature of literature or lyrical traditions like the *doha,*

masnavi, qasida and *ghazal* etc. There are ways of writing literary history in the Indian subcontinent, such as the *tazkira* (biographical collection of poems in prose form)[vi] in the Urdu poetic tradition. Mufti also mentions (133) that

> Faruqi has argued that the form of *tazkira* is dramatically different from literary history, for not only does it not follow chorology in its assembling of biographical material, but it has no recourse to the passage of time whatsoever as a structuring element and views the poetic text as existing simultaneously in the past and present.

So, the Orientalist literary tradition not only introduces a new form of literary historiography based on differentiation (religion, language and standard) but also ignoring already existing forms which are suitable for the larger linguistic and multiform lyrical traditions. Mufti highlights the role of the colonial state and their newly established institution and writes:

> The Fort William College enterprise—its narratives and such supplementary forms of its textual production as glossaries, dictionaries, and grammars—which, as I have argued is the first stances anywhere of a standardization of the northern vernacular in two forms, each firmly marked by its basis in a conception of communities marked by denominational difference, was thus merely the first step in this process of conflicted vernacularization, which is completed in the historicization of this diverse textual corpus. More accurately, we should say that the first literary histories of the northern vernacular constitute an attempt to provide a historical basis to the supposedly distinct languages first standardized at Fort William. (140)

The poetry quoted by Hyder in *Äg kā Daryā* challenged the historical narrative constructed by colonial powers. The history of the languages of the nation states (of India and Pakistan) was Orientalist in nature. The history challenged the continuity of poetry. Hyder questioned this. It is also interesting to note that this lack of continuity is problematic even for the modern nation state, as India and Pakistan share the same history.

This new historiography does not address problems of origin and neither does it question pre-colonial methods of recording history, and the significance of this history for culture, society, and civilization itself. Hyder, as an Urdu writer, becomes problematic for the national culture of India and Pakistan, as Urdu lends itself to the historical and cultural identities of both nations. Hyder wrote in "high Urdu". This language already posed a challenge for India and Pakistan when they emerged as new nations and even writing Hindu and Buddhist religious texts[vii] became problematic. Hyder also rightly described Urdu as the language of exile. One is reminded of Lukács's term "transcendental homelessness".

What Aijaz Ahmad says about *Äg kā Daryā* is in fact contrary to the reality of this work as in Urdu texts, issues relating to civilization and history are in many ways more central. *Äg kā Daryā* is deeply effective in questioning and challenging nation-state ideology.

[i] All translations are by the author.
[ii] Children have always been a tool of nationalism. Nehru's image was always that of Chacha Nehru. This persona was further cemented by the celebration of his birthday as Children's Day in India. When a world leader visits another country, a show is made out of their welcoming where they are often greeted by children. A movie came out in the fifties called *Jagrity* (1954) which means awakening. It is an early example of the use of children for nationalism in Hindi Cinema. Its songs tell us about the selective version of history brandished by nationalism and fed as propaganda with its biases against the anti-Islamic era, which is solely characterised by violence and the Indian struggle against the Mughals.
[iii] This paragraph tells us about Kamal's childhood being a part of and being utilized by the INC movement and Nehru's emergence as a popular figure amongst children as Chacha Nehru. Poetry becomes emotionally charged, as a new genre called patriotic poetry emerges, which is still growing in post-colonial India even though the British went back a long time ago.
[iv] *Bhaiyye*: Local term, used especially in the cities and towns in Western Uttar Pradesh; the locals use it very frequently in conversations. *"Bhaiyye"* can be used for son, brother, friend or any other man, even for a stranger. In Mumbai this term is used as derogatorily for people (mostly for daily wages workers) who belong to UP and Bihar, to make them feel inferior.
[v] The Medieval period belongs to these Sufi orders too, and Pir-Murid poetry also reaches its highest point in this era only. Amir Khusro, the thirteenth-century poet, wrote his poem on the love of his peer Nizamuddin Awlia who belongs to the Chishtī *silsila*.
[vi] "[T]he *tazkira*, as genre of writing, keen to memorialising and honouring and transmission of a particular poetic practice within a larger linguistic field, large and Multiform North Indian vernacular" (Mufti141).
[vii] "The question of national culture in Pakistan is characterized, first of all, according to Faiz, by a problem that arises as soon as one tries to specify the point of origin of the culture to which Pakistan as a nation-state is heir. If this beginning is located in the earliest settled culture known to have inhabited the territory that is now Pakistan, namely, the Indus Valley or Harappan civilization, then all the intervening stages and influences—from the Vedic-Aryan to the Buddhist and Greek must also be included in 'our' cultural heritage. This means, of course, Faiz told his readers and audiences, that the cultural prehistory of Pakistan, a state created in the name of the cultural distinctness of Indian Muslims— is not distinguishable from that of post-Partition India. All Muslim countries, Faiz points out, trace their history to some pre-Islamic culture: Egypt to Pharaonic times, Iraq to Babylon, even Arabia to the so-called *Jāhiliyya* (Age of Ignorance). But if pre-Islamic, Indic culture is also our own, does that not negate the very basis of the demand for Pakistan" (Mufti 233)?

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