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Geo-political and Sociocultural mysteries of Southern Punjab in Laghari's *D Generation* : A New Historical Perspective

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Abstract

The study investigates the relationship between the story and the society especially of Southern Punjab by examining *D Generation* (2023) through the prism of New Historicism (1980). The theory employed to unveil the mysteries asserts that no text can be studied beyond its historical context. By analyzing power structures in contemporary Pakistani society, marginalization of certain sections of society and the use of inter-textual references, the paper reveals intricate web of reasons which made that area suspicious as well as neglected. The study places the narrative within the larger historical framework of Southern Punjab by recognizing the famous work of Stephen Greenblatt (1980), emphasizing the significance of historical context for comprehending the sensitive issues related to politics and culture. The paper is descriptive and qualitative in nature, while findings show that power structure in the modern culture of Southern Punjab and bordering tribal areas are working on the mechanisms of control and power that function inside societal institutions whereas the real cause of conflict, as portrayed in the title, conveyed through the symbolic cover page of the text and context at the backdrop of the story.

Keywords: New historicism, power structure, marginalized voices, sociocultural norms, history, context

Introduction

Mehdi Laghari's *D Generation* (2023) is a portrayal of sociocultural and geo-political dimensions of contemporary Southern Punjab of Pakistan. DG Khan Division, in particular Southern Punjab division of Pakistan, falls in the areas with severe poverty, limited industrialization, and poor infrastructure. The situation further worsens the socioeconomic conditions of the inhabitants of the area. (Ahmad & Zahir, 2020; Akhtar et al., 2018). The region also faces certain serious challenges including poverty, marginalization of different sections of society, and limited access to quality healthcare and education. Research conducted by Khalid & Leghari (2023) asserts that 39% of Southern Punjab's population lives below the poverty line, with significant economic differences as compared to other areas of Punjab. Another major issue faced by this area is marginalization. Gender and economy-based marginalization of women and deprived people is of particular importance concerning Southern Punjab of Pakistan. Marginalization excludes certain individuals or groups from mainstream society based on socioeconomic and cultural characteristics (Zahra et al., 2018). Gender based marginalization is common for women in Southern Punjab as they face significant challenges including violence, restricted access to education, employment and brutal customary practices like honor killings, and forced marriages (Bukhari, 2022; HRCP, 2022). Along with gender-based cultural marginalization, economic deprivation and limited access to employment opportunities, further, this area has confined women to the domestic sphere and agriculture; restricting their role in the social-political decision-making process. (Sadiq & Ahmad, 2022; Asian Development Bank, 2022). Looking into the power dynamics of Southern Punjab, one finds a tribal and clan-based social structure that influences the culture and lives of the inhabitants of this area. In such societies, people are governed by tribal leaders or sardars at the local level, who hold a significant authority over community affairs that include land allocation and political representation. Such power structures based on hierarchies always favor unjust or unequal distribution of resources, unequal representation of people in the decision-making process and unjust reinforcement of existing power dynamics (Amin & Gillani, 2023). It also increases

disparities with partial behaviors of tribal leaders towards their tribal men with the provision of resources and protection in exchange for their loyalty and support.

After 9/11, Pakistan, particularly the Southern areas of Punjab, saw the emergence of non-state actors and certain transnational challenges like terrorism and extremism. Extremist ideologies and militant activities flourished rapidly which geo-political issues, and socioeconomic challenges added fuel to the fire. Events like the Afghan-Soviet War (1980s) and the US attack of 9/11 showed a great impact in the form of militancy; militant groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS emerged in the area (Jamil et al., 2021; Firdous, 2009; Khan, 2014). Weak local governance structures became the easy targets for these militant groups. They exploited these structures and established their stronghold in the region by attacking civilians, religious minorities, and security personnel. The novel gives a portrayal of the geopolitical and sociocultural landscape of the contemporary Southern Punjab of Pakistan and the issues faced by the people. New Historicism serves as a theoretical tool to analyze the hidden meaning which reveal the historical and social structures of Southern Punjab. The study examines how the novel addresses themes of power, marginalization, and socio-political conflict, that illustrate the complicated links between individual lives of people in the broader historical context and intertextual references employed by the author to create meaning while linking present and past. *D Generation* (2023) serves as a window to the historical and social complexities of the region under the lens of Stephen Greenblatt (1980) that highlights unbreakable ties between literature, history and society.

Research Statement

Research highlights the contemporary power dynamics, sociocultural and geopolitical issues of Southern Punjab as depicted in the novel *D Generation* (Laghari, 2023). It peeps into the real life of folks in Southern Punjab of Pakistan and measures the intensities with which, characters' lives and decisions are influenced due the ongoing complex societal structures of Pakistani society. It also explores, how power structures operate within contemporary southern Punjab, the real-time situation of marginalized voices in the society and the role of intertextuality in magnifying the meaning of text.

Research Objectives

1. To examine geopolitical and sociocultural issues of Southern Punjab addressed by Laghri in the *D Generation* (2023)
2. To investigate the power structure in the contemporary Southern Punjab, Pakistan
3. To highlight the role of inter textual references in creating meaning of the text in the particular text

Significance of the Study

The study presents a comprehension of the socio-political, economical and cultural settings of the areas under discussion that reveals the issues and insecurities dealt by the people in South Punjab, Pakistan. By examining power structures, marginalization and intertextuality in the narrative, this paper sheds light on the picaresque details of hidden conflicts woven in the social fabric of the region which further gives meaning to inherent tensions and challenges faced by the people.

Literature Review

Stephen Greenblatt (1980), examines the idea of '*self-fashioning*' in his New Historic (1980) in his influential book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980). According to Greenblatt (1980), people actively created and exhibited their identities in Renaissance society in reaction to the political, social, and cultural forces of the day. The notion that '*self-fashioning*' is a performative act, in which people deliberately take on roles, behaviors and narratives to negotiate social status; exercise power, and control their destinies, is fundamental to his work. In his analysis of the literary works and public representations of Renaissance, famous people such as William Shakespeare (1616) and Thomas More, Greenblatt (1980) shows the process of constructing one's identity is connected with larger historical processes of ideological contest and cultural transformation. This idea of '*self-fashioning*' gives a framework to comprehend literature which reflects and shapes social reality in a variety of historical contexts; in addition to offering insight into the dynamics of identity creation in Renaissance England (Greenblatt, 1980). In *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (1985), Jonathan Dollimore (1948) applies New Historicism to the plays of William Shakespeare (1616) by analyzing the socio-political environments in which they were created and performed. He

believes that Shakespeare (1616) does not have a historical specificity, which means that his work is not historical and not relevant across all cultures rather Shakespeare's (1616) work has a sociopolitical contextual relevance to England in the early modern period. Dollimore (1948) guides further narrates that literature intertwines with power as Shakespeare's theatre responded to and participated in the paradoxical politics, social problems, and cultural anxieties of its time. Tying with ideological Works, Dollimore (1948) studies that Shakespeare's writings provide ideological functions, which do not solely espouse discourses but also question them, thus undermining the myth of the plays as well as being above politics. Mullin (1987) also discusses how Shakespeare's dramatization brings into the flow of ideologies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean English society by implying the participation of his plays in other intellectual processes from the interpretation of New Historicism. Holding it up against Dollimore's method (1948), which pays considerable attention to the political implications of the plays and offers a rich and multilayered interpretation, it is clear that history cannot be sidelined when it comes to Shakespearean drama (Dollimore, 1985). Louis Montrose (1981) played a key role in the development of New Historicism in America as a pioneer in the sphere of literary studies. He illuminates the politics of power in the texts and literary works as a result of his outstanding work titled *A Poetics of Renaissance Culture* (1981). His research brings out details of the sociopolitical realities in a manner that narrates that the written works either resist or complement the hegemonic systems of the society. Montrose's (1981) work defines how literary works serve as fields to exercise authority and identifies the ways of contesting inequity and oppression; such learning deepens the understanding that the culture is produced and consumed. Thus, along with deepening our understanding of the Renaissance text, his work is valuable for priceless lessons on the topicality of literature as a site of struggle in the modern world through the analysis of the relation between literature, politics, and society (Montrose, 1981). A New Historicism approach deals with the context of a certain epoch that influences not only the creation of a particular piece of literature but also the processes of its interpretation. An inscription of texts is looked at not necessarily in the individual entity; while it is a text but a product that is entangled into the overall matrix of historiography. New Historicism (1980) promotes literature, appreciate and criticize it through the exploration of the relations between

literature and history; the processes of writing is mirroring and distorting the reality of the given time in the works of legends as well as the oppressed contemporary voices.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine Laghari's *D Generation* (2023) from a New Historical perspective. The primary data is taken from the novel itself which is further analyzed through close reading based on the themes of historical and cultural context, power dynamics, marginalized voices, and intertextuality. Secondary sources such as academic articles and critical essays are consulted to provide a broader context.

Theoretical Framework

Stephen Greenblatt's (1980) New Historicism initiated a significant shift in literary criticism emphasizing the importance of historical context in analyzing literary works. New Historicism rooted in the *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), *Towards a Poetics of Culture* (1987), and *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988) comprises of combination of two literary philosophies, namely post-structuralism and postmodernism, which emphasize the interconnection between literature, culture, history, and social dynamics. It rejects traditional historical research methods for they do not bring to account the cultural, social, and intellectual aspects of an age and these methods revolve around political events and institutions. Greenblatt's (1980) model explores that literary texts are influenced by their sociocultural and political contexts and how literature, in turn, frames these historical and cultural contexts. The paper implied four primary aspects of New Historicism; text-context, power dynamics, marginalization and intertextuality. Greenblatt's (1980) first assertion is that the literature cannot be separated from its cultural and historical context. He argues that, for a better understanding of literary work, a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural and political background in which a literary work was created is necessary. Literature, according to New Historicism, is a mirror that reflects the societal and cultural practices of its time; it influences and influenced by such practices. In *Shakespearean Negotiations*(1988), Greenblatt (1980) explores that Shakespeare's works relate to and comment on the political and cultural background of Elizabethan England.

His analysis of Renaissance literature shows his keen concern for understanding the historical backdrop to comprehend, how literature and culture shape each other. He asserts:

“Symbolic Acquisition. Here a social practice or other mode of social energy is transferred to the stage by means of representation. No cash payment is made, but the object acquired is not in the realm of things indifferent, and something is implicitly or explicitly given in return for it. The transferring agency has its purposes, which may be more or less overt”. (p.10)

In this way, he emphasizes that literature and cultural context are not free from each other and both shapes each other. New Historicism (Greenblatt, 1980) significantly focuses on power structures and their dynamics in a particular culture; portrayed in a literary text. Greenblatt (1980) incorporates Michel Foucault's (1984) theory of power dynamics (1998); documented the nature of power as “exercised” everywhere within a society, without any possession of any particular group/individual, it shapes and influences the behaviors and choices of people in a society. It further highlights that the literary texts reflect and contest the power structures of that particular age. A major concern of New Historicism examines the ways institutions; such as law, religion, and monarchy, build and strengthen power structures that affect narratives and characters within a particular text. Through an analysis of the integration of power with social, cultural, and political factors, New Historicism also investigates how new power structures emerge and how power shifts. For example, through analysis of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603), Greenblatt (1980) elaborates on the complex relations of power within a specific culture. He asserts in his book *Renaissance self-Fashioning* (1980), “*Criticism can legitimately show-as I hope my discussion of Othello does--that Shakespeare relentlessly explores the relations of power in a given culture*” (p.254). Another important concern of New Historicism is marginalized sections of the society. It explores the portrayal of oppressed and marginalized groups in literary works and probes how they serve as an agency for these marginalized voices. New Historicism (1980) emphasizes that literature serves as a platform, where such voices resist dominant power structures and their ideologies. In his essays such as *Fiction and Friction* (1990), *Racial Memory and Literary History* (2001), and *Shakespeare and the Exorcists*, Greenblatt (1980) analyzes the depiction of such marginalized sections of society and their

resistance to dominant forces. Aligning with Foucault's concept of power, Greenblatt's (1980) approach considers that literature and cultural activities provide a space for contest, negotiation and the emergence of alternative forms of power. He speaks in his *Fiction and Friction* as:

“ And why should we expect..... that the strategy that worked for dominant class fractions in the early part of the twentieth century will continue to work in a new century for hitherto marginalized groups, except as a mode of absorption and containment? Such groups may believe that they are appropriating traditional forms, but it may well be the forms that are appropriating them. There must be something reassuring to the existing structure of things if emergent groups wish to recapitulate the hoariest myths of origin, but why should we endorse such reassurance?” (P.5)

Greenblatt (1980) considers literature as a whole and not isolated as it reflects influences on the production, interpretation, and reception of new literature. Arguing so, he emphasizes the significance of intertextuality in literature; While advocating the idea that a literary text is a part of a complex web, it is interconnected with other texts, historical events, and cultural practices, as Greenblatt (1980) opposes the traditional approaches that treat texts as autonomous entities. Intertextuality serves as a link between different texts and probes how texts interact with each other through referencing and borrowing. According to Greenblatt's (1980) New Historicism, literary texts constantly keep responding to and engaging with other texts, cultural practices, and historical events. In this way, intertextuality enhances the reader's understanding of the social and historical context in which the text is situated as it creates meaning. Greenblatt (1980), in his *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988) asserts that literary pleasure and interest is “*a collective production*” since language as the “*heart of literary power*” is the “*supreme instance of collective creation*”(p.4).

Data Analysis

Historical Context

Set in the post 9/11 Southern Punjab and the surrounding tribal territories, where the complexities of politics, crime, and power converge, *D Generation* (2023) by Laghari tells a captivating story. Paralleling the real-life struggles of communities dealing with the aftermath of terrorism and issues of law and order, the novel digs deeply into the complex web of socio-political factors that highlights the shadows of the area. In this chaotic setting, the characters negotiate a world where old power dynamics collide with new ones, and where allegiances are formed and dissolved in the fight for supremacy and existence. The novel takes place in a location characterized with instability and unrest; immersing readers in a world where corruption, brutality and the exploitation of religion are prevalent. In this examination, one looks into how the novel provides a window into the complex web of power relations and the obstacles that impact the lives of the people living in Southern Punjab. The following textual lines portray an event of a bomb blast at the Shrine of Sakhi Sarwar, a well-known Sufi Saint of D.G Khan (Southern Punjab). There were two bomb blasts at Sakhi Sarwar Shrine on the 3rd April, 2011 as reported by well-known news channels and newspapers.

“BANG. Lonhda was trying to get up...blood oozing from his right elbow. He could not understand the situation for a while. It was a little dark. No, it wasn't; perhaps a cloud of smoke made it feel so. What is this noise...rather than screams and moans? What happened? Lonhda was trying to grab the situation. Where is Ghhaiteer? The first question, after coming into senses, he put to Phatee.” (p.27)

The comparison between the news and the extracted section of the text reveals a noticeable similarity when analyzed in the historical context of the 2011 Dera Ghazi Khan Shrine attack. The news article provides an objective summary of the event, including details about its occurrence in Dera Ghazi Khan, the number of people who were killed and injured, the timing of the attack on a Sunday, and the specific target, which was the Sakhi Sarwar shrine. The text highlights the suddenness and destruction of the assault by using terms such as *"suicide bombings"*, *"hundreds of worshipers"* and *"religious ceremony"*. On the other hand, Lonhda's

viewpoint, as portrayed in the paragraph, captures the confusion and bewilderment that occurred right after the explosion. By utilizing vivid sensory elements like "BANG", "blood oozing", and the "cloud of smoke", the text creates a link between history and fiction; engaging the reader in the disordered aftermath, effectively portraying the urgent quest for comprehension of the upheaval. Lonhda's desire for connection, as shown by the question "Where is Ghhaiteer?", brings a heartfelt human aspect to the story; highlighting the deep effect of the catastrophe on individuals. The individualization of the tragedy goes beyond mere statistic depiction and emphasizes the emotional and bodily impact caused by acts of violence. In this way, the news report and Lonhda's narrative provide different but complimentary viewpoints that together give a complete and detailed depiction of the event, including both its factual information and its significant impact on people. Furthermore, the deficient health services in rural areas of Southern Punjab of Pakistan are also highlighted as "He arranged transport to shift them to the District hospital, as there was no ambulance in the local health facility"(p.56).

Lack of proper medical facilities was a common problem in rural Southern Punjabi communities throughout history and the novel's time period is no exception. This fact is further emphasized in the text by pointing out that the local health facility does not have an ambulance, so other means of transportation must be arranged to transfer patients to the District hospital. This representation highlights the difficulties rural areas have in obtaining necessary medical treatment, a persistent problem made worse by reasons such as a lack of resources, insufficient financing, and outdated infrastructure. Even though Pakistan's healthcare system underwent significant improvements in the years following 9/11, many rural areas, especially Southern Punjab, continued to face a lack of facilities and marginalization. Inadequate and unequal access to healthcare, particularly for rural communities already burdened by distance and scarce resources, is highlighted by the lack of ambulances at local health institutions. To address inequalities and ensure equitable access to healthcare services, targeted interventions and investment in rural healthcare infrastructure are urgently needed, as this portrayal is in line with the larger socioeconomic and healthcare challenges experienced by rural communities in Pakistan.

Militancy in tribal areas of Southern Punjab spread in the last two decades i.e. "Hakeem has some evidence of weapon smuggling and involvement of Zahid in the shrine bomb blast. In fact, it all

happened last year in winter....” (p.69). As per the major claim of New Historical critics is that no text exists without a historical background (Greenblate, 1982), the novel unveils historical background of the tribal areas of Southern Punjab especially in the last twenty years. In the above-mentioned era, immoral practices and violence were common in the country in common and in Southern Punjab in particular. Weapon smuggling and Zahid's involvement in a shrine bomb explosion give a vivid picture of the situation. In fact, these lines depict security concerns, militant activities, and complex socio-political issues creating problems in the Southern Punjab of Pakistan after 9/11. Issues like socioeconomic problems, ideological extremism, and geopolitical tensions have long been encouraging militancy and instability, thus producing bloodshed and serious security concerns in the region. Tribal areas of Southern Punjab have been the target of militancy and insurgency, which affected not only these areas but also added to regional and global security issues.

Power Structure

Greenblatt (1980), influenced by Michael Foucault, believes that power relations in the context of text influence the text (Greenblatt, 1982). Speaking about power dynamics operating in Southern Punjab of Pakistan, Mehdi Laghari's *D Generation* (2023) illuminates the dark corridors of power structures. It is interesting to examine the complex relations between influence, politics, and political approaches. The novel reveals the local rules of political games, how political players influence power structures and, the way, they increase their influence in the complex power system of tribal areas. The text also reveals the ways in which political players are patronized and how their benefits like their access to resources through influence depend upon their obedience to bigger powers. Nepotism is also the focus of the novel, where public resources are distributed on the basis of personal connections and familial ties. The text elaborates the power structure in Southern Punjab of Pakistan, distribution of the economic and political resources are the factors affecting them and infringe rights of other people of the area with less or least political influences as depicted in the novel: *“It is almost complete; we are going to announce tenders for the same. But, it was decided that the contract would go to the brother of the Maulana.” It alarmed Ehsan Elahi” (p.45).*

These lines highlight the complexity of the power structures of Southern Punjab that how personal or political contacts centralize the power into the chosen ones i.e. they have already made a decision to give a contract to Mavlana's brother without considering his eligibility highlights the nepotism that is based on the political influence of Mavlana. Such favoritism helps established power structures to keep up and go on smoothly. It also encourages the accumulation of power in particular circles and leads such people to form alliances to keep power under their heels, thus strengthening their hold. The concern raised by Ehsan Elahi emphasizes shows a competitive show of politics in the area and the competitors are well aware of how their actions would affect their own political position. *"Ehsan Elahi asked the Maulana to accept some donations for his religious school"*(p.48) sheds light on how the political landscape of Southern Punjab is shaped by the complex interplay between decisions about resource allocation and factors related to power, influence, and personal relationships. Elahi's contribution for the religious school highlights the complex power structures that exist in Southern Punjab because his financial support for madrassa is a means of strengthening and cultivating his political connections. Elahi wants favors of Mavlana by giving him financial support while on the other hand using Mavlana's influence in religious circles to achieve his political ambitions. This transaction is a prime example of bartering on the beneficial relationship that exists in the region between religious leaders and political authorities, where money patronage is frequently used as a means of gaining allegiance and support. It also emphasizes how important religious institutions are to the political climate in Southern Punjab, where religious leaders have great power over their followers and can affect political outcomes. This case also highlights the ways in which traditional political ties as well as strategic alliances formed via the trade of resources and favors influence power dynamics in the region. The writer elaborates manipulation of religious ideologies to conceal illegal acts of people in the text as follows:

"You know very well that my son Zahid is trading in grains nowadays. He has contacts with the Shahdeen group, and his consignments are being routed through tribal areas up to the far-flung bordering areas for our needy Muslim brethren. His trucks are being halted and even looted by Sohbat Khan's group on

the way to the border area. You are very close to that group. You can use your influence to make peace with this group. They are fighting a holy war.” (p.52)

It is vividly shown here that Elahi uses religion and humanity to justify his unlawful acts and dark side to his operations. Under the guise of helping "*needy Muslim brethren*" Elahi tries to hide his profit from the Shahdeen gang by portraying his son Zahid's grain trade as a service. The fact that Sohbat Khan's organization was aiming its attacks at Zahid's shipments shows dangerous and uncertain sides of these activities. Nevertheless, rather than denouncing such fraudulent activities and brutality, Elahi encourages the other party to utilize their position to mediate a peace deal with Sohbat Khan's faction, characterizing their battle as a "*holy war*". The politicians acquire wealth and power under the guise of service; in fact a greater purpose by willfully conflating criminal enterprises with religious morality. It highlights the political climate of Southern Punjab, as portrayed in the book, involves the exploitation of vulnerable communities and the manipulation of religious sentiments. The real power structure, which is not built only on money rather agricultural land, is also an important factor in gaining power in the context of Southern Punjab. The narrator says: "*Hakeem Sahib, you, and me, all of us are from a poor family background. Now we have money and resources, but one thing is still missing from our reach: agricultural land and power over the masses and the system*"(p.143). Shahdeen emphasizes the rise of persons from low to influential and wealthy positions, which is an important part of the power structure depicted in the book. Recognizing their common low-income origins highlights the idea of social mobility and the desire for power to overcome one's situation. Shahdeen notes that even though they have accumulated a lot of money and resources, they still lack authority over the land for farming and the ability to affect the public and the system as a whole. Wealth, land ownership, and political influence are all deeply interrelated in this story, as this observation reveals. It implies that having money is important for climbing the social ladder, but controlling important resources and institutions is where real power and influence come from. In the novel, Shahdeen highlights the complex interplay between economic, social, and political elements in determining an individual's path and position in the power structure by putting stress on the significance of owning farmland and controlling the masses and the system. This scenario sheds light on the complex structure of centralizing the

power in one hand, as in the novel, the characters such as Hakeem and Shahdeen are ambitions to establish themselves within the sociopolitical setting of Southern Punjab.

Marginalization

The study gives depiction of marginalization in urban, rural and tribal areas of Southern Punjab which elaborates that certain groups in Southern Punjab are marginalized on the basis of economy and gender. As Greenblatt (1980) asserts; a text, revealing historical background also speaks of marginalized voices or certain groups which are marginalized on different basis (Greenblatt, 1982). The novel gives a vivid picture of the difficulties and limitations imposed on women in the typical patriarchal society of said areas. They are voiceless being entirely dependent upon masculine gender. Another type of marginalization discussed in the novel is marginalization on the basis of socioeconomic category, especially in rural areas of Southern Punjab. It reveals the nature of marginalization and its significant effects on the lives of individuals and communities while being in the backward landscape of the Punjab. A woman, whose husband is dead, is mourning in the following words that depict her dependency and marginalization in a patriarchal society.

“Look, finally, he is leaving me. Anyone, ask him to stay.... Please let him realize my pain and love. Who will compensate for my loss? Live! Wherever you want to, but live at least. I promise you not to say a word. Have I ever uttered a word? O’ my protector, O’ my reason to live, please be with me. O’ you betrayer, don’t betray me. Waiting for you was my destiny...Wailing for you is my future. She felt relieved of dumbness and guilty of relief at the same time.” (p.13-14)

Within the emotional setting of a lady reaching out to her deceased partner, the apparent scene depicts marginalization. The title attributed to her boyfriend, such as *"Protector"*, imply a societal norm that women are expected to rely on their partners for their safety and security. Her query, *"Have I ever spoken?"*, implies that her voice may have been suppressed in the relationship; with her wants and desires possibly being ignored or disregarded. The depiction of his leaving as an act of treachery intensifies her feeling of vulnerability and abandonment, emphasizing the emotional impact of his absence. Moreover, expressions such as *"Live!*

Wherever you desire, but live at the very least" appear to suggest a conditional version of liberty, in which her ability to act is dependent on his existence and endorsement. This study reveals the underlying power structures emphasizing the possibility of the woman being marginalized within the context of her romantic relationship. However, to fully comprehend the issue further, contextual facts about their relationship and the wider societal standards that impact their interactions would be necessary. Zubaida, main character of the novel; *"She was a young, charming wife of an aged man, which was sufficient to induce some of the men around her to fall in love just for fun"*(p.33), was forced to marry an aged Hakeem with a huge age difference. Further, she is portrayed as an attractive object to attract people for fun , which enhances the levels of Zubaida's marginalization in the story. It highlights her diminished sense of self to simply being married, emphasizing her position as a spouse to an older husband, therefore eradicating her own identity and ability to act independently. Moreover, the emphasis on her *"charm"* as the primary means of attracting other men presents her as a mere object of physical attractiveness; lacking in emotional depth and intellectual capacity, thereby reducing her to an object. Zubaida's impotence is emphasized by the casual nature of the men's interest, portrayed as merely *"just for fun"*. This underscores her lack of control over her own life and relationships as she is unable to influence their momentary desires. This representation supports cultural norms that mandate a young woman's subordination to her spouse, regardless of the age gap, perpetuating discrimination based on gender and age. Nevertheless, this presents a limited perspective yet in order to completely comprehend Zubaida's marginalization, it is essential to take into account her viewpoint on the level of attention she receives; the cultural norms that shape such conduct and if she endeavors to assert herself in opposition to it. The death of Hakeem's first wife started a chain of events for Zubaida where she has no control over her life or will. She has no right to disagree with what is happening to her. As narrated:

"Zubaida, a sixteen-year-old girl full of life, but a viable-swapping-wife for the dead old one, couldn't agree or disagree: the agreement she signed didn't carry the burden of proof of social duress. Death sometimes kick starts a chain reaction of several other deaths....."(p.34)

This reinforces the story of Zubaida's marginalization uncovering additional dimensions of her powerlessness and commodification. She is referred to as a "*viable-swapping wife*" which highlights how she is treated as a mere object, highlighting her dehumanization and lack of control in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the lack of recognition while not in the agreement of *Nikah* for the sake of social norms; she agreed to imply the immense cultural force that compelled her to accept the marriage without her consent. Regardless of the circumstances, Zubaida's genuine emotions and opinions are disregarded, underscoring her significant deprivation of independence and ability to express herself. The symbolic allusion to death as a trigger emphasizes the tremendous and destructive influence of forced marriage on Zubaida's existence and essence, indicating the cascading sequence of anguish upsets in motion. The distressing depiction of Zubaida's difficult situation influenced by societal expectations serves as a clear example of her exclusion based on her age, gender, and socioeconomic status within her specific circumstances. To elaborate marginalization of Zubaida on physical grounds, the following textual lines portray the feelings and ambitions of Zubaida regarding her physical desires for sex. Hakeem is not able to fulfill her desires because of his old age and she feels helpless for her physical desire i.e. "*Man gives meaning to the existence of a woman! Was it Hakeem or her thoughts of Zahid...tears in whose eyes...or in her own? She could not sort it out*" (p.34). Zubaida's forced union with Hakeem and the disturbing depiction of her plight emphasizes the physical and emotional toll inflicted upon her youthful physique and psyche ; accentuating the coercive aspects of their union. The assertion that "*Man gives meaning to the existence of a woman!*" vividly exemplifies the repressive gender dynamics that restrict Zubaida's identity and value to patriarchal norms, relegating her to a mere way for male needs and validation. In the middle of the confusion and distress, the contrast between Hakeem and Zubaida's thoughts about Zahid suggests that Zubaida longs for sincere love and connection, serving as a powerful reminder of the emotional neglect and deprivation she experiences in her arranged marriage.

Similarly economic marginalization is also not a strange thing in Southern Punjab; most people are economically dependent upon land, which is either owned by fuddles or by the government. Tenants are mostly poor and have no way to prosperity. To add fuel to the fire, there are ill

intentions of politically and economically strong people to take the lease of government-owned land and deprive these marginalized people of pieces of land as depicted:

“Five hundred acres is not a joke. And you know many tenants are poor people. They don’t have the resources and will to cultivate this land and get the crops at optimum levels. I think you should take this matter seriously; otherwise, Murad Ali Khan is all set to get the lease of this land”(p.51).

It emphasizes the possibility of excluding those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, especially in terms of their ability to obtain land and resources. The significance of possessing five hundred acres of land suggests dominion and affluence, indicating that ownership corresponds to substantial authority. These lines show how individuals are running for resources and how essential it is for building and maintaining power over the masses in that society. Furthermore, recognizing that these tenants do not have the essential resources to efficiently grow the land, such as fertilizer or sophisticated farming techniques, adds to their disadvantage. Distribution of land, in Southern Punjab provides a good chance for deprived tenants to overcome poverty by strengthening their economy. Here, Laghari (2023) shows powerful sections of contemporary society fight for such lands to take charge by hook or by crook. In the above scenario, both powerful individuals are fighting for the land and whoever wins, will deprive poor tenants of land which can save them from poverty. External pressure plays a role in complicating the situation. In short, it is a clear depiction of the challenges that individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds encounter in accessing resources, which in turn perpetuates poverty and limits their chances for socioeconomic progress.

Inter-textual Relation and Meaning Making

D Generation (2023) presents a web of interconnected stories with a diverse cultural backdrop, providing an ideal setting for looking into the concept of meaning making. It explores themes of tradition, spirituality and human strength; incorporating a wide range of cultural, literal and mythological allusions. The novel encourages readers to examine the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity as well as the intricate links between texts, cultural symbols and the characters' real experiences through the interactions of characters such as Lonhda Faqeer,

Sanwal and Bakhtawer. Through the inter textual references the underlying significance of the stories, identify the literary and cultural influences that resonate inside it, and attain a profound understanding of the complex portrayal of human existence in the narrative. Starting with the following poetic lines give a glimpse of the Punjabi Mystic tradition having a tie with the novel's text and story as "*Lorhadevaan, Panidevaan, PhulPhul, wadraythewo ...*" (p.15). Punjabi mystic poetry that captures the profound spiritual, cultural and allegorical depth of life portrayed in the novel *The D Generation* (2023) represent the idea of heavenly sustenance and abundance; symbolizing spiritual nourishment and growth as well as the crucial role of water and blooming plants in supporting life, especially in the dry region near the Himalayan foothills described in the novel. The sentences in question evoke the cyclical essence of existence and the interdependence of all living creatures; enhancing the story with multiple levels of significance that encourage readers to contemplate topics of customs, spirituality and the inherent connection between mankind and the environment. "*Sultan told Fareed that poetry was an overstatement of feelings*" (p. 57) which relates with Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "*the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings*". These quotes encapsulate poetry's essence as an artistic medium that amplifies and enhances human emotions. Wordsworth's description of poetry as a "*spontaneous overflow*" alludes to an organic and unrestrained release of emotion, whereas Sultan's label of poetry as an "*overstatement*" highlights its ability to exaggerate and magnify emotions beyond their typical boundaries. This connection emphasizes the transforming power of poetry because both viewpoints imply that emotions are not only conveyed but also elevated to a higher plane of significance through the medium of the poem.

Laghari (2023) creates an inter textual link between the *D Generation* (2023) and William Wordsworth's (1850) to create meanings for the readers as New Historicism (1980) also claims to understand text within the context and history to understand the meaning. it also holds multiple relations with other texts, cultures, and walks of life as Sultan's claim that poetry has a deep emotional resonance. Laghari (2023) knits the threads of different fields i.e. knowledge, culture and history to frame a tapestry of inter textual references which reveals the meanings of the story through its context. Punjab Land Revenue Act of 1967 can be seen in the following lines i.e. "*The revenue rule is that the person who has adjacent land has the right to allotment of*

the government land” (p.88). Punjab Land Revenue Act of 1967 gives a sense of reality to the fiction as this Act bears laws regarding ownership and transfer of immovable property. A clause from the Punjab Land Revenue Act is used in the text that elaborates a rule for the transfer of immovable property from one person to another. Rule asserts that a person holding land adjacent to a land being transferred holds the first right to purchase such land. This illuminates the complex ties between land ownership, tenure, and governance in the area. The use of such legal information in the text shows Laghari’s knowledge of the contemporary laws of the land he is living in and writing about. By putting the story in the historical and legal framework of Punjab's land reforms in the 1960s; this inter textual connection enhances the New Historic (1980) perspective of the narrative which further defines the meanings of the text clarifying the effects of land laws on rural livelihoods, social equity, and economic justice. There is an inter textual connection between Darwinism and the story as *“These people are a glaring example of the theory of 'Survival of the fittest'” (p.130)* in a realistic way. The idea of *"survival of the fittest"* was put forth by Charles Darwin in his theory of evolution. According to Darwin's hypothesis, organisms that are most suited to their surroundings have a higher chance of surviving and procreating, which allows them to pass on their advantageous qualities to subsequent generations. The allusion to *"survival of the fittest"* in the context of the book alludes to a comparison between the socioeconomic dynamics at work in the community shown in the story and the natural selection seen in biological evolution. The phrase *"glaring example"* highlights this contrast suggesting that people or groups like Ehsan Ilahi, Hakeem, Shahdeen and Sohbat Khan are representative of the processes of competition and adaptation that are fundamental to Darwin's theory. By referencing Darwinism, the story tackles more general themes of rivalry, adaptability and fortitude in the face of hardship; providing readers with a prism to view the characters' challenges and victories in light of evolutionary theory. By placing the experiences of the characters within a larger scientific and philosophical framework, this inter textual connection of meaning making enhances the story and encourages readers to consider the similarities between the natural world and human society. Similarly, a classical Latin proverb used by Alexander Pope in his poetry *“Saen, to err is human, and we all are burdened with the follies of our past” (p.137)* elaborates the motives of the text within context. Laghari (2023),

through one of his characters, creates a literary connection and cultural depth in the story which encourages the readers to make the right moral choices through understanding the meaning of everlasting wisdom found in ancient literature.

Conclusion

D Generation (2023) by Laghari explores the historical, cultural, and social landscape of Southern Punjab, Pakistan, whereas, New Historicism, used as a theoretical tool for the analysis of the text emphasizing on understanding the literary works in their historical contexts. *D Generation* (2023) portrays the themes of power structures, marginalization, and inter textual connection of the narrative through its rich commentary on the socio-political conditions of Southern Punjab and broader human experience which expedites a complex tapestry sociocultural and geo-political mysteries found in that particular region. Reflecting on the socio-political environment, historical events, cultural practices, and social norms uncovers the complexities of the past are still prevailing in the region. The novel addresses the issues of colonial legacy in the form of tribal and social power structures, socioeconomic disparities and religious intolerance. In this way, novel leads its readers to probe the bleak patches of history, with an understanding of how historical events continue to impact the present as historical context has a remarkable role in shaping the narrative the of *D Generation* (2023). It is influence, manipulation and control that frames the society in Southern Punjab society and power is fluid ; a multidimensional force which takes different shapes at different levels like individual, familial, and societal. Power structure, particularly in Southern Punjab, is remnant of the colonial legacy of the region, which is further influenced by religious ideologies, tribal customs and regional politics. Characters like Ehsan Ilahi, Murad Ali Khan and Hakeem portray power driven by their greed and aspirations which manipulate societal norms. The novel also highlights that local systems and institutions give permanence to inequalities, furthermore, they help in maintaining a status quo that favors the powerful people through the subjugation of weaker sections of society.

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