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Democratising Indigenous identity in Pakistani Anglophone Speculative Fiction

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Abstract

*In the post-colonial world, humanities has been a pertinent forum for anti-colonial resistance and assertion. The emancipative strategies do not go beyond polarization and deconstruction. This study will identify the significance of the revival of indigenization in literature and humanities to democratize the discipline in ideological spheres. Fostering a more democratic outlook this study complies with Edward Said's idea he has established in his work Humanism and Democratic Criticism (2006). Said defies essentialist ideology associated with humanism and propounds that the humanist is a maker in the sense of perpetual canonization and self-critique. In appreciation of Auerbach's *Memises* (1946) Said identifies the significance of the reclamation of one's tradition to gain assertion and recognition in the world, which is marked with diverse and dynamic epistemologies. The study will identify the relevant reflections in Pakistani speculative fiction where indigenous trends of Urdu Science Fiction have been introduced to refigure the genre of science fiction with local trends in arts and humanities. In this process of indigenization, this study projects Pakistani anglophone writers as active participants in a global scenario for introducing indigenous forms of knowledge and alternate narratives of resistance. Other than polarization and deconstruction they have endeavored to establish a new form of counter-critique.*

KEYWORDS: Indigeneity, Humanities , Pakistani speculative fiction ,Counter critique

Daniel Heath Justice in his book *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*(2018) talks about different stories, one kind of stories are told by Indigenous peoples and others are told about them. While the first are essential to identity maintenance and prservance whereas the second may be "toxic" and projects *indigenous deficiency* . It professes that indigenous identity is “ in a state of constant lack: in morals, laws, culture, restraint, language, ambition, hygiene, desire, love”.(Justice ,2018,p.2) Justice here figures out two main audiences: settler, arrivant, and indigenous peoples seeking to preserve, or in some cases regain and revitalize, their links to and relationships with each other and our non-human family other communities who have arrived to colonize Indigenous territories for various reasons. The second category entails non-Indigenous worldviews into the analysis of Indigenous literatures that can diminish or appropriate Indigenous cultures and worldviews, in addition to missing important details. To decolonize indigenous identity, indigenous accounts about their history, culture, and traditions from indigenous sources are so necessary. For this purpose I explore the genre of speculative fiction

written by Pakistani writers in which indigenous identity has been asserted through stories which are based upon the Muslim and Pakistani fantasy tradition. In accordance with Democratic outlook proposed by Edward Said in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*(2004), this study explores the prospects that Pakistani speculative fiction has opened up for assertion of indigenous identity in the global world.

It is since the inception of the discipline postcolonial studies, that the prominent voices regarding emancipative strategies have been relying upon assimilation and hybridization (Vizenor,1994: Bhaba ,1994) or polarization and deconstruction (Ngugi,1986:Spivak,2009) which made it limited to “fighting phase” (Fanon ;1968, p.155) Therefore the counter narratives in realistic literatures merely examine and critique the legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and oppression in literature and culture. However less efforts are made in assertion and representation of indigenous identity as an active participant in humanistic endeavors in the global scenario. Edward Said (2004) in his most mature and final work emphasized that the democratic outlook is required to gain assertion and realization in the global world. By defying essentialist ideology Said propounds that in the sense of perpetual canonization and self-critique, self-knowledge is the highest form of human achievement and the true goal of humanistic education. The application of Said’s ideology lies in creating the literary sphere“ democratic, open to all classes and backgrounds, and as a process of unending disclosure, discovery, self-criticism, and liberation” (Said, 2004, p. 22). Said’s ideas of tradition and self-knowledge are the paraphernalia to attain a palpable presence in the global world and to reify the assertion, it is pertinent to solidify the counter critique through indigenization of literature.

In this regard,Usman T. Malik’s *The Pauper Prince and the Eucalyptus Jinn* (2015) and Sami Shah’s*Boy of Fire and Earth* (2017), are selected to identify the reimagining and reclamation of indigenous cultural and traditional histories in Pakistani speculative fiction which allows authors to subvert traditional tropes and narratives by challenging Eurocentric perspectives and offering alternative viewpoints. A new generation of Pakistani writers are engaging directly with Western science fiction and fantasy by modifying the same genre tropes and applying them to South Asian cultural, religious, and historical concerns. By incorporating elements of magical realism, indigenous cosmologies, or non-Western mythologies, authors can diversify and decolonize the genre. “The tropes and motifs drawn from indigenous South Asian and Muslim cultures uniquely help reimagine just and vibrant futures for Muslim readers” (Sadaf&Kanwal 2024 p.4). The authors draw inspiration from local legends, folktales, and religious narratives to create fantastical worlds that resonate with Pakistani audiences. Themes such as jinn, djinns, Sufi mysticism, and supernatural beings are recurrent motifs, offering a unique blend of tradition and innovation (ibid.) In the exploration of above mentioned features this study inquires why reclamation of indigenous identity should comply with democratic outlook? and how does the speculative fiction genre work to connect our past with the present situation and our present with futures in this radically changed global scenario?

In *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), Jameson defines fantasy as the celebration of human creative power and absolute freedom. In science fiction, on the other hand, he sees the function of dramatizing our incapacity to imagine the future and reflecting on our own absolute limits. Finally, there is the "inextinguishable feeling of mixed wonder and oppression" in the face of

"the vast and provocative abyss of the [horrifyingly inhuman] unknown," (Jameson ,2005, p.60) .The phrase "speculative fiction" was first used in 1941 by Heinlein, who also popularized it with his 1947 article *On the Writing of Speculative Fiction* and his 1951 World Science Fiction Convention guest-of-honor speech. According to Heinlein, science fiction's achievement is embodied in speculative fiction, which encompasses its finest pieces. He proclaims that speculative fiction highlights a human rather than technological problem . It is defined as stories that are more concerned with human activities in reaction to a new scenario caused by science or technology. It differs significantly from mainstream science fiction because of this concept.

The similar reflections can be found in M. Keith Booker's *The Critical Reception of Speculative Fiction*(2013). He writes " Speculative genres...are in fact themselves vehicles for new forms of critical engagement, and often quite self-consciously so" (Booker 2013,p.3). A related definition can be traced in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature* (2017) about speculative fiction by Marek Oziewicz "a genre distinct from and opposite to science fiction in its exclusive focus on possible futures, and a supercategory for all genres that deliberately depart from imitating "consensus reality" of everyday experience. (Oziewicz ,2017,p.1). He further explains that the term "speculative fiction" has three historically located meanings: a subgenre of science fiction that deals with human rather than technological problems, a genre distinct from and opposite to science fiction in its exclusive focus on possible futures, and a super category for all genres that deliberately depart from imitating "consensus reality" of everyday experience. (Oziewicz ; 2017). In this regard, speculative fiction involves science fiction, horror, and fantasy but also their relative cognate and hybrids genres like the gothic, superhero stories ,post-apocalyptic narratives dystopian and weird fiction, alternate history, steampunk, slipstream, magic realism, fractured fairy tales, and more. It should be observed that rather than seeking a proper definition, a better approach is to theorize "speculative fiction" as a term whose semantic register has continued to expand. Oziewicz (2017) also explains that the term refers to a variety of story styles that challenge the post-Enlightenment mindset and were previously barred from "Literature" stories. The consensus reality differs from the empirical-materialist one, it challenges the usual Western cultural bias of writing imitating reality and seeks to restore a sense of wonder. Grace Dillon in *Indigenous Futurisms* (2012), declares this genre adequate to fictionalize Indigenous realities. Mostly Indigenous critics and writers propounded that literary tropes common in speculative fiction, such as contact with alien species, apocalyptic disasters or dystopian scenarios, can be easily related to the lived experiences of many Indigenous communities (Dillon, 2012; Newman Fricke, 2019; Nixon, 2020; Whitehead, 2020).

In *Arab and Muslim Science Fiction* (2022) Hosam A. Ibrahim Elzembely and Emad El-Din Aysha identify the problem of earlier scholarship being dominated by "*the singular perspective of a foreign expert*", ,arguing that much prior work failed to engage with Arab/Muslim science fiction from an "*insider's cultural perspective*". They also examine the nature, genesis, and history of Arabic and Muslim science fiction, highlighting both its evolution and the challenges faced by its authors. Throughout history, and even today, mainstream popular media frequently portrays native characters as unworthy historical persons (p.1). Indigenous authors have envisaged new universes in speculative genres where indigenous identity and culture can be asserted and redefined. By narrating their own stories in their own voices these

narratives provide a unique platform for exploring these themes in imaginative and sometimes allegorical ways. In this regard speculative fiction has the ability to challenge the rules of reality that govern our daily lives and the conventions of realist fiction. This allows for the exploration of theoretical questions and problems, which can inform our non speculative reading and interpretive practices as literary practitioners. The present study identifies the greater potential of the speculative genre in addressing more modern issues like racism, neo-colonialism, marginalization, patriarchy, fundamentalism, gender issues, war technology, and anxieties surrounding emerging forms of nationalism. The study focuses on Pakistani anglophone speculative narratives that open a casement into the Muslim djinn's mythology based upon Asian and Arab fantasy fables. Instead of delineating western speculative images of ghosts and witches, these stories configure the indigenous knowledge in futuristic fables and present them as historically informed and culturally rooted. The goal of this indigenization process is to disseminate Indigenous approaches to being, knowing, and doing in a manner that will promote the successful integration of Indigenous knowledge in the global world. This process of indigenization projects that Pakistani anglophone speculative fiction writers are active participants in a global scenario for introducing indigenous forms of knowledge and alternate narratives of resistance. Other than polarization and deconstruction, they have endeavored to invest into indigenous literary paradigms to form an alternate and more grounded counter-critique.

The origins of Pakistani speculative fiction can be traced back within indigenous literary paradigm in Urdu language. In *Pakistani Speculative Fiction: Origins, Contestations, Horizons* (2021) Aroosa Kanwal and Asma Mansoor traced the roots of this particular genre in Urdu literature. Writers like Ibn-e-Safi, known for his "Jasoosi Duniya" and Imran Series Alif Layla (The Thousand and One Nights), Dastan-e Amir Hamza incorporated elements of mystery, adventure, and speculative themes catering to popular tastes and shaping the Urdu literary landscape. Popular publications such as *Bachonka Bagh*, *Bachonki Dunya*, and *Taleem-o-Tarbiat*, in circulation since the 1950s, have shaped the imaginative landscape that feeds into Pakistani Speculative Fiction. In the twentieth century global world this genre provides opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard and for underrepresented cultures to be represented. Authors from postcolonial contexts can use the genre to reclaim their narratives, assert their identities, and imagine a more equitable future. Pakistani writers are no exceptions in this regard. Some works are very representative of Pakistani culture, some represent landscape and some talk about the religious obligations related to Pakistani Muslim Identity. Nihal Khan *The Smokecense of Pluvistan* (2020), is set in a future Pakistani city ravaged by cycles of drought and rains, where the characters' survival in an environmental catastrophe depends on a rediscovering of faith-based understandings of human responsibility towards the planet. The novel *Boy of Fire and Earth* (2017) is set against the backdrop of Karachi's bustling streets, vibrant markets, and ancient ruins, it immerses readers in a richly textured world where magic and modernity collide. Maha Khan Phillips's *The Curse of Mohenjodaro* (2016), Faraz Talat's novella *Seventy Four* (2020), and Farah Naz Rishi's *I Hope You Get This Message* (2019), all feature protagonists of Pakistani-Muslim origin, challenge the myth of Western intellectual and technological supremacy. This contribution of Pakistani anglophone writers is immense as it follows Said's belief in humanistic values and democratic principles. When Said talks about the strategies of revitalizing humanities

with self-knowledge he presents the example of the production of *Mimesis* (1946) by Eric Auerbach. When Auerbach fled the Nazis and lived in Turkey, in those years of exile during the war and at Istanbul, the libraries were not well equipped for European studies. International communications were impeded for comparative literature. But Auerbach decided to write a literary masterpiece embedded in his own literary tradition. By paying homage to his own literary tradition Auerbach wrote a literary masterpiece, that is a monument. In an appreciation of Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946), Said identifies the significance of the reclamation of one's tradition to gain assertion and recognition in the world, which is marked with diverse and dynamic epistemologies. According to Said (2004), words play a crucial role as active actors in historical and political transformation rather than being inert characters. Intellectuals need to get back into the public eye, but they also need to fight against academic trends that lead to obscurantism and superfluous jargon, as well as insularity and parochialism. Said claims that the false belief that there is an unavoidable clash between long-standing customs and our world's growing complexity and diversity is the root of the "humanities crisis." However, this viewpoint ignores the fact that the revolutionaries of the past were the canonized philosophers of today and that human progress is inherently characterized by disruption, questioning, and reform. By considering the emerging social responsibilities of writers and intellectuals in an ever more interdependent world and exploring the enduring influence of Eric Auerbach's critical masterpiece, *Mimesis*, Said not only makes a persuasive case for humanistic education but provides his own captivating and deeply personal perspective on a shared intellectual heritage (p.59). As Auerbach produced a masterpiece while staying in alien land either for commemoration or to emphasize his own cultural identity, we find in Anglophone Pakistani speculative fiction the assertion of their own religious and cultural knowledge aimed to inspire the global audience with indigenous literary specificities.

The selected texts are award winning and emblematically pertinent to this discussion. Usman T. Malik's *The Pauper Prince and the Eucalyptus Jinn* (2015) and Sami Shah's *The Boy of Fire and Earth* (2017) excellently delineate Pakistani cultural tropes along with muslim narrative of the supernatural. *The Pauper Prince and the Eucalyptus Jinn* (2015) is a critically acclaimed short story that blends fantasy and folklore with a contemporary setting. Malik's novella blends elements of weird fiction and magic realism, presenting a protagonist, Sal, whose sense of reality is disrupted by encounters with the supernatural. While magic realism integrates magical elements as indigenous to a peripheral reality, weird fiction, represented here, introduces the bizarre and alien—strange forces that unsettle familiar experience.

Ali Zaidi (sal), a Pakistani-American professor, recalls his grandfather Sharif's story of Zeenat Begum, a disinherited Mughal princess, and a protective jinn living in an ancient eucalyptus tree outside Lahore. Although initially dismissed as myth, Salman travels to Lahore to verify the tale, feeling estranged from his American life. His journey reveals a concealed world when a rug merchant, actually the jinn, discloses that Sharif unearthed the Jam-e-Jaam (Cup of Heaven), an artifact that preserves memories from the jinn's ancient era before humans existed. The novella thus uses the jinn's otherworldly nature to contrast with and challenge Salman's empirical understanding of reality, epitomizing weird fiction's theme of reconciling conventional reality with the inexplicable. The narrative weaves together elements of Pakistani

folklore, exploring themes of identity, loss, and the supernatural. America, the melting pot, represents a dynamic, fluctuating array of cultures that are progressively woven together to form a beautiful tapestry. First and second generation immigrants face an existential problem as they attempt to comprehend their past and role in the new American terrain. Cultural disputes occur and fade at the most unexpected times. In his mid-20s Salman attempts to comprehend his Pakistani immigrant father and grandparents, who represent a world and culture vastly different from the Florida landscape in which he grew up. Malik sought to introduce the Islamic mysticism and religious eschatology in the very beginning of the narrative. The novel starts with the lines from the English translation of Muhiyuddin Ibn Arab *The Meccan Revelations* (2022-2019). It tells that the Spirit World manifests in sensory form, the Human Eye restricts it. The spiritual entity cannot depart that Form as long as man continues to see it in this unique fashion. To flee, the spiritual entity manifests an Image for him, much like a veil. It simulates the Image moving in a specific direction so that the Eye may follow it. At this point, the spiritual Entity escapes its confines and vanishes. Whoever understands this and wishes to keep perception of the Spiritual must not allow his eye to pursue this illusion. "This is one of the divine secrets." The novella draws upon philosophy regarding myth and history as well as ontology regarding the creation of humanity and jinn. Sal, a small child in America, opens the story with his grandfather telling him tales of the impoverished princess he once knew in Lahore, Pakistan. Zeenat Begum, a granddaughter of the last Mughal Emperor, had a little tea shop. She informed people that a jinn stood guard over her from the Eucalyptus tree that shaded her small stall, having previously safeguarded her royal ancestors. When Sal becomes older, he finds proof in his grandfather's belongings that his family is actually far closer to the Mughal princess than his grandfather ever admitted. The princess is the embodiment of past history and its significance is presented through an incident when a child is hurt close to the tree, there are whispers that he is possessed by the jinn, he says something obviously inane, "The lightning trees are dying," and soon adults are demanding that the enormous, centuries-old tree—likely a historical landmark by now—be taken down. But the princess resisted the advances of the officers and she exclaimed: "Over my dead body,..... It was planted by my forefathers. It's a relic, its history." The tree was the focal point of several tales, including the ones about the kid who fell from it and the lightning strike. The princess eventually relocated with her family, but not before instructing the young man Muhammad Sharif (Grand father) to locate the relic hidden beneath the tree and keep it hidden for good. Upon his funeral visit, Sal discovers his grandfather's books and journals, but they just raise further doubts regarding the bizarre stories of the Old World. The notes and recollections of the Princess and Jinn stories are full of mystical knowledge and nuggets of truth. Sal travels to Old Lahore in a last-ditch attempt to discover himself and the family history lost to fabulous legend. Not only history and supernatural Islamic imagery is being portrayed in this narrative but Sal's visit to rediscover his grandfather's past is suggestive and alludes towards the pastness and self-knowledge Said suggested: "the essence of humanism is to understand human history as a continuous process of self-understanding and self-realization" (Said, 2004 p.26). The problem lies here with the lack of self-knowledge that makes native identity vulnerable and tangible that cannot withstand the seismic shift brought on by advances in technological communication, intellectual specialization, and cultural sensitivity. In order to cope with the change the dire necessity is to face the challenges of the "emergent, the insurgent, the unrequited, and the unexplored" (Said, 2004 p.26). Through Sharif's tale of Zeenat Begum, a Mughal

princess and exile under British colonial rule, and her guardian jinn, the story contrasts the feudalist past with the modern, postcolonial present. As Sal reflects on the plight of impoverished Indian nobility post-Partition, he sees how pre-modern social structures like feudal landholding still exist in Pakistan's semi-peripheral society. This layered reality gives credibility to Sharif's fairy tale, making the existence of the jinn in contemporary Lahore conceivable.

Malik explores the limits of representation and the concept of totality through the presence of the jinn—entities that epitomize the “weird” and defy both perception and comprehension. The jinn are hidden from human sight, embodying a realm beyond empirical knowledge. Malik notes that the Arabic root J-N-N, meaning “concealed,” signifies an entire hidden world beyond representation. These supernatural beings possess unique, otherworldly abilities—such as sensing through unconventional means and appearing as veils—that challenge the possibility of direct perception, symbolizing the illusory nature of reality and the limitations of human understanding. In light of this sophistication, I quote Edward Said (2004) who fashions a new humanist praxis which “read[s] and interpret[s] the part [aesthetic artifact] to the whole [e.g., historical/social context] in such a way as to neither deny the specificity of the individual experience in and of an aesthetic work nor to rule out the validity of a projected, putative, or implied sense of the whole” (p.55-6) .

The destruction of the “Cup of Heaven” by the protagonist Salman, represents a rejection of the modern desire to grasp totality. Though Salman briefly experiences enlightenment through his grandfather's memories of the jinn's hidden realm, he ultimately chooses to destroy the cup, releasing the jinn and symbolizing the inherent impossibility of containing or fully knowing the totality. This act signifies the modern world's inability to engage fully with obscured histories, social inequalities, and fragmented realities that remain hidden, yet shape society. By refusing to pursue total knowledge, Salman preserves his own identity, signaling that in a modern, capitalist world, totality must remain elusive—its dark truths about social structures and inequalities too vast and complex to fully comprehend or confront. The breaking of the “Cup of Heaven” in *The Pauper Prince and the Eucalyptus Jinn* (2015) closely aligns with Edward Said's concept of democratic criticism, particularly his advocacy for critical humanism as a practice that resists absolute, totalizing knowledge in favor of a more nuanced and inclusive understanding.

In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), Said argues for a humanism that challenges dominant, pre-packaged representations of reality imposed by powerful institutions, which often seek to assert totalizing control over knowledge and discourse. For Said, democratic criticism involves engaging with marginalized perspectives, fragmented histories, and obscured truths to broaden our understanding of society, emphasizing that true humanism acknowledges limitations and prioritizes plurality over totality. Said proclaims that : “ the essence of humanism is to understand human history as a continuous process of self-understanding and self-realization (p. 26).

In Malik's novella, Sal's destruction of the cup—an artifact symbolizing the desire to grasp the full history and hidden truths of the jinn's world—can be interpreted as a rejection of this totalizing impulse. By shattering the cup and releasing the jinn, Sal metaphorically relinquishes the desire to “know” in an absolute, unmediated manner. This act aligns with Said's

critique, suggesting that the modern world cannot—and perhaps should not—attempt to contain or fully comprehend complex realities such as social inequality and fractured historical experiences. Instead, the emphasis shifts to engaging critically with fragments and glimpses of truth, echoing Said's advocacy for actively questioning and expanding our perspectives to include multiple, marginalized narratives rather than striving for an illusory, comprehensive totality. He advocates “[c]hange is human history, and human history as made by human action and understood accordingly is the very ground of the humanities” (p.10). Therefore, the breaking of the cup signifies a philosophical alignment with Said’s idea that criticism should democratize knowledge rather than pursue an authoritative "whole," while respecting the complexity and diversity of lived realities and the limits of human understanding.

Sami Shah, a Pakistani-Australian writer, is the author of *Boy of Fire and Earth* (2017). It narrates the tale of a young child with remarkable abilities. This tale tells the story of a boy named Wahid who is placed at the doorstep of a childless couple in Karachi one night by a mysterious creature made of smokeless fire, and who has grown up with hopes and desires. He is always absorbing fantastic worlds in novels and comics. However, things go horribly wrong when Wahid is accosted by two djinns while returning from a party with his girlfriend, whom he adores. He managed to kill one of them using unusual powers within him, but with rage and the loss of a partner, the other Jin abducted Maheen's soul. The first portion of the book revolves with Wahid's quest, while the second part is about contacting and retrieving these djinn. Wahid's journey leads him from the hidden supernatural underworld of Karachi to the realm of Kaf, the narrative unfolds diverse tropes in a singular frame, *Yajuj-Majuj*, the ghost of *Alexander the Great*, *PichalPairees*, and the haunting beaches of Hawkes Bay. Some sly *Iblis* take Wahid to Kaf, the world of djinn, inhabited by their clan, Shah unquestionably addresses a number of topics pertaining to religious polarization, heaven and hell, rising extremism, power struggles, and corruption that plague the streets of contemporary Karachi using humor, fantasy, and Islamic mythology. The multiple themes are addressed, the narrative highlights fluid movement between parallel worlds, which intensifies the sense of violence and makes the story gripping. After Wahid's attack, Sami shifts the scene to a professor who has written about Djinns. While Wahid hopes the professor can help him locate them, the professor admits his claims were fabricated to attract attention and funding. He cynically remarks that although many laughed, the majority of people believed him, showing how easily the public is manipulated. In this hair-raising tale, Wahid's encounter leads him into a mysterious supernatural realm where he discovers more about his own ancestry. Sami Shah's creation of a new parallel fantasy world filled with Djinns offers an exceptional and captivating experience for readers. This genre remains largely unexplored in the subcontinent in contrast to the West, making it surprising that authors haven't capitalized on this opportunity. Therefore, the contribution of Sami Shah, who enthralls us with Wahid's frightening misadventures, is a positive and exciting development. The vivid images and hilarious imagination bring these portrayals to life beautifully. Shah adapted djinns from mythology into horror and comedy. He depicted djinn as a representation of the cultural myths that dominate a civilization and alter its overall behavior. It's interesting to note that indigenous literary paradigm is rich with traditional mythology and local supernatural elements that can change the misperception that there is an inexorable conflict between established traditions and our increasingly complex and diversified world. The supremacy of western science fiction and

emerging cognitive majoritarianism have proved to be challenging but speculative fiction has opened up horizons “where real life and make-believe converge, allowing for interplanetary travel, time travel and the undead to come out and play.”(Wood, 2022, as quoted in Girolimon, 2022). This is how speculative fiction, more than other forms of literature, “provides the language to conceptualize a world outside of colonial influences, beyond the loss of homeland, resources, and the unethical treatment of the population” (Newman Fricke,2019,p.109) .

The need of the hour is to unveil the past so the prevailing outlook of indigenous culture, history and tradition can be transformed not with abrogation alone but with reappropriation by reclamation of indigeneity, the concept we see in Pakistani Speculative fiction. Once it will be achieved the extremism ,aggression,intolerance and false representation will be changed into a resilient and democratic outlook. It is noteworthy that "the appropriation and transformation of dominant technologies and discourses" enable postcolonial authors to "intervene in the dominant discourse (Ashcroft and Griffiths' 1989).assert that Pakistani speculative fiction exemplifies this by taking on speculative elements, which are often linked to Western science fiction or fantasy, and reshaping them into stories that critique present socio-political conditions while being grounded in indigenous cultural contexts. This reclamation confronts the colonial marginalization of South Asian knowledge systems, creating space for their inclusion in a wider speculative tradition. By incorporating Ashcroft and Griffiths' (1989) concept of "re-territorialization," these imaginative narratives reclaim narrative realms previously dominated by Eurocentric ideologies, positioning South Asian themes as essential rather than marginal to global literary traditions. Said's approach to democratic criticism regarding postcolonial literary techniques converge within these works, illustrating how speculative fiction serves as a dialogic space for contesting prevailing narratives while affirming the significance of diverse and blended viewpoints.

Hence , Pakistani anglophone speculative narratives allow authors to (re)appropriate distinctly South Asian or Pakistani tropes and motifs. These works not only offer political and social critique, but also create new worlds of indigenous cultures rooted in myth and alternative futures. Pakistani Anglophone speculative stories serve as powerful venues for rethinking cultural and national identities, enabling writers to critically interact with postcolonial legacies while dreaming up alternative futures rooted in indigenous South Asian or Pakistani traditions. This literary genre responds to the unifying pressures of global culture and the remaining colonial frameworks of representation. By merging speculative elements with unique South Asian tropes and motifs, these stories navigate the balance between cultural particularity and universal themes, crafting imaginative spaces for political, social, and epistemological critiques. Edward Said’s idea of democratic criticism, as discussed in works such as *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), offers a valuable perspective for examining the significance of Pakistani speculative fiction. Said advocates for an inclusive, pluralistic method of cultural critique, stressing the need to engage with a range of narratives to promote understanding and challenge hegemonic ideologies. Pakistani speculative stories reflect this democratic spirit by integrating indigenous myths and cultural themes into speculative frameworks, thus validating the significance of local knowledge systems within global conversations.

In doing so, these stories push back against the predominance of Eurocentric literary traditions and showcase the diversity of human experiences. Said (1983) emphasizes the "worldliness" of texts, how they are situated within and respond to particular historical and social contexts aligns with how Pakistani speculative fiction tackles the socio-political realities of its era. For instance, these works critique concerns such as environmental degradation, political corruption, and social inequality while drawing from local myths and histories to suggest alternative futures. This interaction between the local and the universal exemplifies Said's notion of democratic criticism, as it creates opportunities for marginalized voices to contribute to global dialogues without being overwhelmed by dominant narratives. Additionally, Said's perspective on criticism as a form of resistance resonates with the underlying political themes found in speculative fiction. By reinterpreting South Asian and Pakistani motifs, these stories confront the cultural dominance of the West, presenting instead diverse and blended viewpoints that capture the intricacies of postcolonial identities. Through this inclusive reworking of cultural elements, Pakistani speculative fiction not only critiques contemporary issues but also envisions futures that go beyond the constraints imposed by colonial and neocolonial forces. Through the incorporation of indigenous cultural symbols and imaginative frameworks, speculative narratives from Pakistani Anglophone authors serve to challenge prevailing power dynamics while also representing a democratic desire to conceptualize inclusive and just futures. As a result, these narratives function as both a form of cultural defiance and creative freedom, seizing the opportunity to tell stories about futures that represent the diverse and vibrant nature of South Asian identities.

By incorporating Said's notion of democratic criticism, we can view Pakistani speculative fiction as a space for dialogue—one that connects the local with the global, the traditional with the futuristic, and the personal with the political. In "relation to human rights and the imaginative capacity of these writings in anticipating future rights that do not yet exist. Such "speculative human rights" warn of future threats to underprivileged societies, not only from rapidly changing technological and environmental factors, but also from epistemological and ideological fronts" (Sadaf&Shazia 2024, p.5).

These stories encourage readers to challenge established power dynamics, cultural norms, and knowledge hierarchies, transforming them into potent instruments for promoting cross-cultural awareness and resisting cultural uniformity. Therefore, the reappropriation of indigenous motifs is not just a process of cultural reclamation but also a profoundly democratic act that underscores the significance of diversity in imagining alternative futures.

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