

(De) Coloniality in Research: A Case Study of English Literary Humanities in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT: *Complacency with its present state and obliviousness of its genealogy can be two signs of a neocolonial discipline in a post-colonial country. English literary humanities in Pakistan can be studied as one such case. One cannot find a single historicization of the discipline produced in the country, while discourse about its worth has yet to gain steam. In this context, the present study aims at analyzing the research which has been produced within the discipline since 1966 to highlight its embedded coloniality and track changes that might reveal tell-tale signs of emerging decoloniality. For the purpose, two journals that have been published by the Department of English Language and Literature (DELL), University of the Punjab, have been surveyed and selections analyzed. The study reveals that no efforts were made on part of the researchers to include their own socio-political or cultural context in writing and hence the inclusion of their identity remained suspended until the end of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in these three decades, comparative studies of literary texts and studies in the translation are almost completely absent. However, in the twentieth century's last decade a few researchers can be seen shifting their academic gazes onto Pakistani English-language writers. The paper then traces some of the ways in which disciplinary research in English literature has moved closer to the national context, due primarily to the emergence of Pakistani English-language writers after 2000; and discusses how even these developments may not be termed as decolonial. Finally, the paper discusses some of the ways which can be utilized to pave the way for decolonial research in the discipline.*

Keywords: decoloniality, postcolonial, English literary humanities, Pakistan, research

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Literary scholars in the field of English literature in Pakistan have not produced research in enviable proportions from 1966 to 1994. However, whatever work had been done, can be accessed through the *Journal of Research (Humanities)* which has been published by Punjab University's Department of English Language and Literature (DELL) since 1966. A survey of this research reveals that during this period, almost all the articles that appeared were written from an ontologically Anglo-centric perspective. It is, however, with the emergence of the first MPhil in English literature programme at DELL in 1992, that we observe a slight shift in research focus since a dedicated journal of English Studies, the first of its kind in the country, was launched by DELL in 1994.¹ Afterward, we witness a gradual accommodation of local writers, however, the state of coloniality, which is defined as the underlying logic of colonization, is far from over.

The purpose of this paper is to first offer an account of research priorities which prevailed in the discipline of English in the three decades, i.e. from 1966 to 1994 to identify its discontents, to trace various research developments from 1994 onwards to the second decade of the twenty-first century, to evaluate this phase from the point of view of decoloniality and finally to offer a few suggestions to promote decolonial research in the domain of English studies in Pakistan.

Articles from the earlier three decades of disciplinary research have been analyzed through the lens of authorial identity. The analysis indicates that almost all writings within the discipline divulge a Euro-centric ontological state. The exploration also reveals that most writers subscribe to universalistic notions about space, time, and other phenomena, yet, paradoxically, reveal the rootedness of these conceptions in European geographies and temporalities. It also discloses their lack of willingness to accommodate anything non-European in their writings.

While analyzing the articles, one realizes that the authors producing literary research in the *JRH*, write from within the Western tradition. The authors seem to be writing with total oblivion of their identity which remains suspended and hence makes way for the assumption that they too

¹ *The Journal of English Studies*, kept publishing until 2009 but since then it has not been published. In the first decade of the new millennia, diversification in research areas becomes manifest.

are part of the western culture. There is a lack of self-reflexivity on part of the authors. Any indirect ways of establishing the authorial intention of producing the study or how it would add to the discourse in which the institution existed are missing. The question of value of the work they produce also remains unanswered.

In almost all the writings from this phase, one encounters the all-encompassing *we*, which is employed as the identity marker of the author. This automatic adoption of western identity through the use of the first-person plural is quite manifest. Consider the use of the following:

It was Troubadours of eleventh-century Provence who discovered that romantic species of passion with which we are so familiar in the work of English poets from Chaucer down to Tennyson. Polite society, which appeared in France at this time, was intimately associated with the most perfect forms of the institutions of chivalry and feudalism of all Europe. (Sirajuddin, *Amour Courtois* 15)

Similarly, in another article, the ‘we’ that includes all readers of English writers, be they English themselves, or Pakistani, their identity as readers remain the same. Spivak has pointed out that since the original reader for English literary texts was English, so when a reader from the postcolonial world reads a text, he has to say yes to the text and that assent brings a degree of cultural alienation with it (Spivak 136). The native identity is thus submerged in the western, or English reader’s identity:

In his article entitled “Amour Courtois”, published in the 1966 issue of *JRH*, professor Sirajuddin² gives the following quote: “Even Gibbon, otherwise, an admirable historian, fell into the error of believing that mankind is essentially the same in all ages and all countries” (9), yet the author does not seem to realize that his article too is based on the assumption he is challenging, and regarding courtly love, the article itself develops and ends as if there can be no cultural equivalent of this in any other part of the world. While he writes “...each age forms its own ideas of human nature” (10), the examples that he offers are only European: “That is why the world is so full of ‘ideas’—the ‘the Faust Idea,’ ‘Prometheus Idea,’ ‘Wandering Jew Idea,’ ‘Don Juan Idea’ (15), he goes

² Professor Sirajuddin was the first Chairperson of the teaching Department of English Language and Literature which was set up at the Punjab University in 1963.

on to add. He quotes Gibbon and Galsworthy. "Literature has to take special account of these minute variations insensibility" but ironically no such thing is done in his own essay (15). The denizens of South Asia however are not mentioned anywhere. This voluntary oblivion of one's self is an important dynamic of the discipline's institutionalization. In this phase of disciplinary research, this erasure of native existence (Viswanathan 18) is manifest. Viswanathan connects this with disciplinary constraints: She writes: "...canonical ideals place limits on who can speak and what can be uttered" (Viswanathan 14).

Within the essay, temporality is referred to in the framing of the topic but geography is elusive. In other words, the issue is dealt with temporally but not spatially.

Even in articles which highlight the agency of the reader, it is revealed that the reader too is from the Western culture. While the author, Imdad Hussain, writing in 1973, says that Shakespeare "is all things to all men," and "Thus, from the point of view of records, the image of Shakespeare the man is delightfully, or shall we say, desirably, vague and we are at a liberty to construct our images to suit our convenience", yet within these "all men", Pakistanis seem to be missing (Hussain 43). It is interesting to note that Shakespeare had been interpreted in Pakistan and his plays had been performed not only in English but also in Punjabi, yet any such hint is missing in the article. This voluntary refusal to accommodate the local perspective aligns well with the curricular exclusivity and pedagogical alienation, the other hallmarks of a colonial discipline. While Shakespeare's plays were performed on stage at the oldest college in Lahore, Government College, yet no step was taken to incorporate translation into the curriculum. An Indian Critic, Jyotsna G. Singh identifies a similar engagement pattern with Shakespeare in the Indian context where he is removed "discursively from colonial history" and thus remains "a problem for postcolonial societies, [which are] struggling to free themselves from the cultural hegemony of the Europeans" (112). He goes on to quote a noted Indian critic, C.D. Narasimhaiah, who called Shakespeare "the true and vital link between India and England (112), but within this link, the traffic seems to be one-way since everything that is deemed valuable comes from Shakespeare and the native subjectivity is just at the receiving end—in the words of Narasimhaiah, "the coming of Shakespeare" meant "the coming of noble speech and brave deeds" (112).

The analysis in Imdad Hussain's article being discussed is cold and acontextual. While a number of translations of Shakespeare existed in

Pakistan, as Salman Bhatti has cited in his work *Tradition and Evolution of Urdu Theatre in Lahore* (2016), yet true to the exclusivist origins of the department, no cultural exchange happens in the script. Singh is of the opinion that in India while “multifaceted and contingent responses to the canonical, ‘classic’ Shakespeare” can be noted, within literary criticism and pedagogy, one can only find uncritical veneration. He especially cites theatrical reproductions of Shakespeare’s plays which open up “endless possibilities of interpretation” (114). Yet nowhere do we find these local interpretations within the confines of disciplinary research.

Since everyone was writing from within the disciplinary tradition, the automatic adoption of the western identity paradigm is evident. A researcher writing in 1985 wrote: “Tentatively, up until the seventeenth century the real Plato or Aristotle was not properly understood” (Butt 4). This absence of precise spatial context is rooted in the universal (European) conception of literature and ideas. Or rather, this non-committal attitude is a tacit acknowledgment that the space being referred to is Europe since such an *understanding* of Plato and Aristotle was not even attempted elsewhere. A very strong streak in the research writings analyzed is that a remark made about Europe, tacitly, is considered true about all places in the world. Consider the following:

The humanists, through education, infused a spirit in the common man that he, rather than feeling incapacitated, prided in his faculties. The sense of hierarchy created by the chauvinistic schoolmen and the bigoted churchmen was smashed” (Butt 6).

The locus of understanding, education, discourses, and dialectics of all kinds is this Europe. As mentioned earlier, one important aspect that is discernible in the research corpus that has been analyzed is that the author’s geographical, historical, or cultural self, howsoever complex it must have been, is absent. The default understanding is that the author is part of the western civilization and hence operates from within the tradition. The attitude of scholars like Ngugi Wa Thiong’o could be held as a foil to this attitude. He had objected to maintaining “the historic continuity of a single [Western] culture” and advocated that African literature should be at the center so that other cultures could be viewed about it (Thiong’o 439), instead of having it the other way around. The situation in Pakistan around this time seemed to be quite the opposite of what Thiong’o supported.

It is interesting to note that while the researchers in Pakistan have constantly been discussing themes of alienation, social alienation, society,

and literature's impact on society, yet working on such themes did not enable them to re-fix their academic gaze on the society that they were a part of. While they would comment on "social alienations" of protagonists in *The Threepenny Opera*, *Mother Courage*, and *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, (Rahim 51) their exclusive focus on texts produced in another culture could be read as evidence of their cultural alienation, especially when it is coupled with the lack of any conversation happening with the cultural products of their society. While it is pointed out that the "social hierarchy" (Rahim 55) is questioned in a particular text, the body of research does not reveal any sign of that happening concerning the Pakistani society. Self-reflexivity, which is considered to be a hallmark of literary engagement, does not seem to be self-evident in the research corpus studied for this research. It is stated how Carlyle grapples with the issue of alienation and "in *Sartor Resartus* he seems to handle the problem of alienation in a way that is both literarily and psychological[ly] rich and successful" (Dogar 56). Similarly, we see that while "Social Relevance of Drama" is discussed in another article, yet the disciplinary constraints would not allow authorial imagination to ponder over the social relevance of the discipline of English literature in the local setting: "The spectators are vitally involved in the play, and no dramatist can ignore the moment to moment response of the spectators" (Abedi, Social Relevance of Drama 65). It would have been natural to switch such a conception to the relationship between an English literary text and its reader in the Pakistani context, yet all this is absent. This could, once again, be attributed to disciplinary confines, since, in this case, the author, Razi Abedi, in his essays, published in the form of various books, keeps arguing for the necessity of inclusion of native literature in translation to ensure inculcation of a literary sensibility among Pakistani students of English literature. Without this and similar efforts, he said, "colonies of the mind could not be undone" (Abedi 2015).

In the Pakistani context, one could blame the curriculum³ for this "loud absence" (Pennycook 19) of the self in research writing. Since the curriculum did not allow the inclusion of texts written by Pakistani writers, or translated texts from regional languages, the institutional mindset considered it impossible to work on cultures other than those they engaged

³ The first author's PhD dissertation, Institutionalization of English Literature in Pakistan, which is yet to be defended, offers historicization and critical analysis of the curriculum and pedagogy of MA English programme at Punjab University from 1882 to 2016.

within the curriculum. Someone might argue that the institutional evolution had not reached that stage where it could have critiqued itself in a self-reflexive mode. This, however, could be easily rebutted by citing those who within this period realized that Europe was not the mother tradition of the areas it colonized and that the discipline must be bent to bow down to the society and culture in which it was now present. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's "On the Abolishment of the English Department" is one famous example.

Even within Pakistan, and in the same academic space, some scholars did point out the imperialist character of academic disciplines. Within the space of *JRH*, we see a critical article written by a philosophy professor written in 1981. It looks at the disciplinary claims with skepticism. The author states that the "Present-day academic philosophy is created and transmitted in an atmosphere of 'scholarly detachment. It appears to be entirely remote from the struggles and needs of the world" (Ahmad 27) and "the claim of ethical neutrality and dispassionateness on their [academic philosophers'] part is a farce". He goes on to find fault with the "total complacency" of the discipline and its resistance to change (Ahmad 28). The desire to connect the discourse to local surroundings is manifest in this article: "The alienation of the native from his own culture is a problem that hangs over much of the cultural activity in the Third World" (Ahmad 29). A clear reference to reclaiming one's identity is made in the article. "...the case argued for here is that the Third World develop its philosophical resources to help its societies flower creatively and intellectually, to become instances of humanity fully becoming itself" (Ahmad 31). Perhaps due to the lack of any dialectics within the domain of humanities research, his clarion call went unnoticed.

It seems that the English professors of Pakistan considered themselves firmly steeped in the Western tradition and had undergone a more complete identity transformation. The evidence for which is decades of research firmly rooted in Eurocentrism without any regard to contextual, historical, and political dynamics. Ngugi had defined the role of the literature department:

The primary duty of any literature department is to illuminate the spirit animating a people, to show how it meets new challenges, and to investigate possible areas of development and involvement (Thiong'o 439).

But any such concern in the institutionalization of English literature is not found in disciplinary research.

We begin to see diversification in research areas in the last decade of the twentieth century. The journey to the study of the self which remained suspended for almost half a century began showing signs of change in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The stranglehold of Eurocentrism was loosened and due to curricular alterations, we begin to witness the emergence of postcolonial perspective in disciplinary research. It is gradually from these textual readings that the discipline began to consider its national context worthy of mention. An important article, in terms of its conversation with the seminal work of Gauri Viswanathan, appeared in the second volume of the *Journal of English Studies*, (*JES*) in 1994. In it, Tariq Rahman surveyed the Anglicist- Orientalist controversy and challenged the notion of Urdu historians who claimed that the British policies were aimed *particularly* against the Muslims of India and demonstrated “that the major objective of the British imperialists was to consolidate and strengthen the empire; within this parameter, however, they differed considerably from each other about linguistic policy” (40). He wanted his readers to know about this controversy because it would help them to understand the “politics of imperialism” with the “overt aim of consolidating the newfound empire” (40). Though the article cites Viswanathan’s work, yet it does not discuss the imperial connection of English literature exclusively as such. The first article to appear on an English-language writer of Pakistani origin, Hanif Kureishi, was published in 1995 (Jivandham). Similarly, this journal published an article on a Pakistani English-language poet Zulfiqar Ghose, an English-language poet in 1998.

From the mid-nineties, both these journals published by the department started accommodating articles on writers who were not from the English canon. *JES*, *in particular*, is an important site as it published research which was done by MPhil scholars who studied at the department and since the curriculum of the MPhil programme was, quite probably, the first in the country which accommodated postcolonial writers, we begin to see articles on African and Caribbean writers. Essays on Indian writers such as Girish Karnad can also be seen. In Volume 8 (2000), we find articles on Nadine Gordimer (Raza), on Lorca (S. Maqbool), on Ben Okri (Saif). In volume 10 (2002) of *JES*, there are three articles on Derek Walcott: “(Chishti), (S. Maqbool), and (Mehmood).

The last article, “The Empire Acts Back: Derek Walcott's The Last Carnival” by Samina Mehmood, the issue of Caribbean identity, which has many echoes of similar debates in Pakistan, is tackled directly. From the title of the article, one can deduce that theory had started influencing

engagement with literature at the MPhil level by this time. For the first time, the stranglehold of English literary canon was being loosened and more familiar texts were being accommodated. Although, still, Pakistani English-language writers were not being taught in most English departments, yet some articles had started appearing in their writings.

Similarly, the emergence of theory also becomes visible during this time when Waseem Anwar wrote “Eighteenth-Century British Narratives and Postcolonial Feminist Theory: The Missing Voices in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* in 2001 (Anwar). The article “examines the unspoken and unattended spaces between a continuously uni-gendered representation of the narrator and his “I [eye]” (73 Vol 9 No. 1).

In 2005, Shaheera Jaffar wrote “The Politics of English Language which quotes Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Gauri Viswanathan, and other thinkers who have all looked at their contexts and highlighted the political character of the English language and its literature. Still, she stops short of going into a self-reflexive mode and bring the debate to the local context. Connecting the discourse to the history of similar debates within the Pakistani context would have been of enormous value. It is important to study the causes which might have dissuaded researchers like Shaheera Jaffar to extrapolate the study by evaluating its impact in her context. One obvious reason must have been the perceived inability of research methods which might have made such a study possible. Here it would also be expedient to look at the available methods through which literary meaning was extracted out of texts. Not only in the curriculum, but also in research articles, we see similar ways in which texts were accessed. It was a form of literary criticism that was deployed. Methods adopted by Viswanathan, for example, reveal that her approach was different.

Facilitated by the Saidian paradigm, Gauri Viswanathan had extensively used archival methods and had cited documents and letters. In the context of disciplinary research in Pakistan, we see that there had been a dearth of methodologies too which dissuaded researchers from digging deep into the native social engagement of literary texts that were taught. Almost all research that is done focused on literary texts. A text, or a literary text, had to be there for a researcher to explore and write about. So, when postcolonial texts became part of the curriculum, the researchers initiated the phase in which they started writing about them. But this phase, too, from 1994 onwards, came about not due to the effort of establishing an “organic living link” (Ahmed) with the society, but as an emulation of the western English departments. In this sense, even the postcolonial

developments became “inadvertently neocolonial” (Huggan, *The Neocolonialism of Postcolonialism: A Cautionary Note* 21).

This lack of self-reflexivity may even be termed as an outcome of ontological occlusion. It is important to highlight that this has remained an institutional practice during most of the disciplinary history. As we have discussed earlier, such evidence cannot be taken in isolation, rather, it can be linked up with the curricular and pedagogic choices that the individuals were exposed to, during their University academics. Since they were not allowed to include native literary content or sensibilities, they could not, automatically, connect textual knowledge with the knowledge of their own locale. Since literary research was mainly textual criticism, it was considered imperative to work on a literary text and since native English-language context which was also considered *literary* was not available in abundance, and whatever was available was considered inferior in quality, the researchers must have opted for practices that were readily accepted. The absence of research methods, methodologies also played their part in supporting institutional inertia.

Thus, we see a new phase in the history of the discipline where steadily articles on various postcolonial writers became visible in the research space. However, Theory, in Gupta’s sense (*The Place of Theory in Literary Disciplines*), does not seem to play a very dominant role even in this new phase of literary studies. In the year 2016, there is an article by Khurshid Alam entitled, “Private Space as a Site of Anti-colonial Imagination” (Alam) in which, through the character of Mir Nihal in Ahmed Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi*, which, to date is the only English-language novel to be studied in the MA curriculum at Punjab University, the author traces his harboring of anti-colonial imagination. The use of the word anti-colonial is itself an important fulcrum through which the long domination of English and western texts, from colonial to neo-colonial phases, would be dismantled. Another important paper about what it means to be a South Asian writer appeared in 2012 in *JRH*. In this article entitled “Subverting the Mother of South Asia: A Description by way of Prescription”, the author begins to debate the identity of South Asian writers and uses many interesting techniques to problematize the issue of representation in a way that hitherto was never attempted. Not only does he object to the categorization of literature written in South Asia as ‘postcolonial’, but he also, in a polemical manner finds a representation of writers based in the west limiting. He writes:

Not the imaginary reality in the mind of a First-world-dwelling

writer, not just the ground realities of poverty, crime, and capitalist oppression, but also the ideals which are spurs for a better future need to be discussed in fiction dealing with the people of South Asia. In short, I demand an end to attempts at making love to an English-reading public which is hungry for more unfamiliar (exotic) themes, or an intellectual demand for defamiliarised narrative techniques, and a valorising of what really constitutes South Asia and ought to make it a better place to live in. (S. Y. Khan 105)

This article claims explicitly that it is diagnosing a problem and that it has to be fixed. The last paragraph is self-explanatory:

Thus we see that in all these texts the idea of the Mother which is so important to the Third World is subverted in favour of ideals not really pertinent to its cultures and thus a kind of hegemonic inscription is inserted in the fictive narratives which tilt the balance in favour of the West. My description of this tilt is by way of prescription; a diagnosis, so that a cure may be indicated. (S. Y. Khan 121)

One could have wished to see more of comparative textual studies, however since the curriculum did not offer any comparative readings, we do not find much research of the kind. Thought, a few attempts were made. Farida Yousaf, for instance, in her article entitled “A Comparison Between History and Historical Novel” brings in historical novelists from the domain of Urdu literature and compares them with Walter Scott within the context of the genre of the historical novel. She mentions Aziz Ahmad, Qazi Abdul Sattar, and Abdul Haleem Sharar and novels like *Firdous-e-Bareen*, *Ayyam-i-Arab*, and *Juya-i-Haq* along with English novels *Ivanhoe*, *Waverley*, and *The Talisman*. She also wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on this comparative study (Yousaf 90-1). Her thesis was entitled *A Comparative Study of Sir Walter Scott and Abdul Haleem Sharrar as Historical Novelists* which was submitted in 2000. This lack of comparative reading can be traced back to the origin of the discipline itself when any possibilities to accommodate comparative poetics were dispensed with in favour of a more exclusivist curriculum (S. Khan, Institutionalization of English Literature in Pakistan).

The same textual space of the Journal of Research (Humanities) was employed for the disciplines which fell under the banner of Humanities and research work in Urdu and English have been published side by side, yet not much of a conversation can be observed. In the year 1969 for

instance, a Ghalib Centenary issue was published and the whole issue was in Urdu language and not even a single English-language article on Ghalib was published in the journal. This, once again, corroborates with the exclusivist design of the institution itself which did not favour any conversation between local and English literatures.

Remarkable it is that throughout the period that I have studied there is a conspicuous, almost religious avoidance from citing the work of any fellow scholar. Since all the fellow researchers were part of the proximal culture, which was considered below-par in terms of its literary potential and hence local literary texts were not incorporated in the curriculum, similar reluctance must have compelled the scholars not to cite from their fellow researchers as it could have affected the 'quality' of their research. There is no dialectical progression at all. No effort at engaging with other's work is evident. Hence no controversy and perhaps that's why the research plane does not offer any exciting discourses or developments.

Writing in one of her articles Shaista Sirajuddin, a professor at Punjab University who also chaired the department, wrote in an article on the breakdown of language in drama and the "non communication" which is presented on stage (61). Her statement could be lifted and applied to the research discourse itself: "Characters shut in their own worlds, follow their own line of thoughts, hardly taking into account what others may be thinking or saying" (63). Because of this similar lack of conversation, the research did not create an impact on the discipline. Sohail Saeed, an assistant professor at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, in an interview was clear and responding to a question about whether the research had created an impact on the discipline responded: "No. Pakistan has never produced those theorists or academic researchers who had an impact on the discipline of English" (Saeed 2017). Similarly, another professor echoed similar concerns and called research in the discipline "mostly mechanical" and recommended more research on teaching English literature and the "outcomes of this experience" (A. Khan 2017)

Research, as a disciplinary practice, can also be seen as the most direct physical output of the discipline. Curricular priorities inevitably find reflected in the research corpus. The shift in research priorities was also seen in 2005, when Postcolonial Literature was added to the MPhil curriculum. It could be safely hypothesized that an inclusive curriculum would pave the way for research which would not be insulated and would address the concerns of the society.

Although the HEC's curricula of BS and MPhil have been diversified since

2012, and especially since 2017 when it mentioned Anglo-American centrism as a problem, the deep structure of the discipline continues to remain Euro-centric. For example courses on “Foundations of Literary Theory and Criticism” for the fifth semester of BS, has for its bulk literary critics of the west (15), and Literary Theory and Practice for the seventh semester (16) wherein there is nothing from non-Western cultures. The changes that have been made can be called mildly significant, as many of the texts that are recommended would disturb the exclusive preeminence of western literary texts. This, one can deduce from the previous developments, would pave the way for further diversification of research, however, in the absence of alternative literary theories, the dependence of the discipline would continue.

The possibility of having an alternate literary theory or a literary theory that is non-western is debated sporadically in the local contexts. However, no systematic effort is visible as yet in which serious discourse was generated on the subject. The subject is too complex and because of the inability of Macaulay’s children—those who are trained only in the western tradition—the possibility of engagement with hundreds of years of native South Asian thought, the chances of indigenous literary theory coming to the fore are quite bleak. However, an effort has to be made by literary scholars in the country because the discontents of western literary theory are many and uncritical emulation of western literary-theoretical concerns may never truly enable humanities in the country. The contexts are hugely dissimilar and hence the local context demands newer philosophies and epistemologies. Literary theory has to be decolonized and it cannot be done without indigenizing it. Without the presence of literary theory which has its geographical roots in the areas that now constitute Pakistan or South Asia, a genuine scholarship that is qualitatively and valuably unique cannot be produced. Aping Western literary- theoretical concerns is a kind of academic vulturism in the words of Graham Huggan (*The Neocolonialism of Postcolonialism: A Cautionary Note*). How this could be accomplished, however, is outside the scope of the present paper. Only after enacting such an epistemological shift can one move towards curricular machinations to ensure the independence of the discipline. Without an institutional conception of a direct correlation between the society of Pakistan and the institution of English literature, the research which is produced by the discipline cannot become genuinely meaningful. Decolonization of the discipline, and especially research is absolutely essential for the human populace of a country like Pakistan. In the final section of the paper, I suggest some of

the ways which would be critical to the project of decolonizing research.

One available antidote to the imperialist function of English literature is the decolonial movement, which advocates epistemic delinking with western formations of knowledge and going to “the reservoir of the ways of life and modes of thinking that have been disqualified” by western knowledge formations (Mignolo 4). This approach calls for a realization, on part of the colonized, that their “inferiority is a fiction created to dominate” them (Mignolo 5). In the present discourse regarding the research in the discipline, this *inferiority* is manifested in the argument that literary works by Pakistani authors are inferior and hence should not exclusively be the focus of academic gaze. Much of the history, as stated earlier, is a testimony to this tacit understanding. The Decoloniality movement, or decolonial discourse, can allow us to conceptualize all significant issues about the discipline’s operations in a totally new and emancipative light.

Another important step to promote decoloniality in research would be greater engagement with texts of the precolonial past. On the one hand, such an engagement would enable one to know about alternative philosophies or conceptions of the world and human beings, while on the other it would help Pakistani scholars to come to terms with their past which is not Orientalist. One case in point can be engagement with the politically-conscious, satiric poetry of Akbar Allahabadi (1846-1927) who wrote an incisive critique of English/modern education due to its deceptive tactics in his poetry during the late nineteenth century. Clearly, he implicated the English education for its agenda to change subjectivities, much earlier than the dynamics of power- knowledge nexus were exposed by the likes of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. Translated below are a few couplets to demonstrate the existence of writers and their poetry who were trying to expose deceptive colonial machinations.

The education that is given to us is mere market’s
The intellect that is taught is only government’s (9)

We consider such books worthy of confiscation
Which teach the sons to call their fathers fanatic (8)

Apart from opening up to newer paradigms, philosophies, and indigenous outlook which may enter the discipline through the conduit of literary theory, or indigenous literary theory, researchers would be able to engage with indigenous forms of literary resistance which appeared as the societies were being colonized. An example in this regard has already been

given in the couplets of Akbar quoted above.

Only after an assessment of the paradigmatic concerns mentioned above through understanding the history of the subject, can the discipline be able to move ahead with pragmatic steps which can end the ideological/neocolonial/Eurocentric character of the discipline. The expansion of the curriculum to include native literary content would be a simple act of incorporation which may not solve the issues highlighted. Within the curriculum, space has to be provided for engagement with the historicizations of the discipline so that the deeper contexts of literary study could be brought to the consciousness of pedagogic subjects.

The need for inclusion of Pakistani English-language literature is paramount because it will allow Pakistani students of literature to come to terms with their own ontological and socio-political issues. Something of the sort has already happened in the country and increasingly English departments in the country are offering courses in Pakistani Literature in English. However, the opinion is also rife that these texts should earn their rites of passage by reflecting artistically in the verbal art form the country—the nation-state, its geography and geopolitics, its historical demography, its vertebral connections across the cultural nerve centres, its ecological, linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural markers⁴. Only after earning these rites of passage can Pakistani Anglophone variety address the double-bind of national (mimetic) expectations and global, artistic demands that they find themselves caught in.⁵

The institutional present does not offer a bleak picture. It has already incorporated texts from its own locale, but it does not deal with the issues of colonization, oppression, imperialism, human misery head-on. Many scholars point out that the authors who choose the English language to write fiction are themselves from the same class which privileges the west and uses the imperial perspectives of the global North.⁶ However, if

⁴ I am indebted to an unpublished paper of Dr Khurram Qadir, former professor of history at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, for this particular linguistic arrangement which he used to advocate for Local Government Solutions to Societal Unity and Diversity.

⁵ For an elaboration of what I mean by it, read Mushtaq Bilal's *Writing Pakistan: Conversations on Identity, Nationhood and Fiction*. Harper Collins, India. 2016

⁶ See Nivedita Majumdar's "When the East is a Career: The Question of Exoticism in Indian Anglophone Literature" in *Postcolonial Text*. Volume 4, No. 3. 2008.

properly chosen, within the discipline these can work as tools to juxtapose indigenous alternatives to western conceptions.

Keeping in mind some aspects of the discussion above, we conclude the paper by proposing a few basic questions which a researcher in the discipline may ask before embarking on a project. These would be: How is the paper/research project related to myself (individual, collective, social, political, historic)? How is it going to be politically effective, socially relevant, contextually applicable, historically informed, and intellectually responsible?⁷ We would encourage the researchers, particularly MPhil and Ph.D. scholars in the discipline to write down their responses before initiating their research as this practice would enable them to include their selves and contexts to ensure that their work is neither pointless nor “supremely pointless” (Eagleton, *The Slow Death of the University*).

⁷ Acknowledgement is made to a section in Suman Gupta’s chapter, “The Place of Theory in Literary Disciplines” published in *A Handbook to Literary Research* (2010) in which he has employed this verbal pattern which has been tweaked here.

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