4 Colonial Melancholy and Post-Partition Nostalgia: Feelings of Dissonance in the Short Fiction of Saʿadat Hasan Manto and Qurratulʿain Hyder

They were fortunate, indeed
Who believed love to be their life's work
And those who loved their work
I was otherwise occupied, all my life
I loved a little, did some work.
Work impeded the course of love,
And love encumbered all my work
In the end, exasperated,
I abandoned both, half done.
Faiz Ahmed Faiz[237]

So far, this study has analysed the discourses of idleness and leisureliness in poetry, novel, and epistolary genres. Each chapter attempts to demonstrate how notions of otium are closely associated with ideas and attitudes embodied by various genres and styles. The stylistic elements of various genres – for instance, personal letters – being autobiographical are naturally more accommodating of discussions of a writer's leisurely disposition. Genres like the novel, on the other hand, having emerged from a vortex of social and literary reorientations, provide for fascinating reading of the negotiations of a topic as ambivalent as otium. In late-colonial South Asia, several of these genre innovations can be seen to have certain implications on how literature and otium transform as concepts. In this chapter, I focus on the emergence of the Urdu genre of short story at the beginning of the twentieth century and how the genre responded to or influenced ideas of idleness. On the one hand, the short story does not have the narrative expanse of the novel and the narrated time to immerse into leisureliness as a reading process; on the other hand, as we shall see, the genre innovations of the short story enable writers to depict time microscopically, sometimes presenting a *slice-of-life*, and always containing the possibility of a flash of

237 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *Śām-i Śahr-i Yārāṉ* (1978), 74. Translation mine.

Published in: Farha Noor: Leisurely Feelings. Emotions and Concepts of Otium in South Asia. Heidelberg: Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing, 2024. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/hasp.1348

insight or a Joycean *epiphany*.[238] Both techniques are conducive to a sense of condensed appreciation and experience of time, allowing for reflection and introspection inherent to the experience of otium. The emergence of the European-American short story genre in the nineteenth century links it intricately to questions of modernity and social reality. The Urdu short story, too, was a response to burning questions of social reality and developed, as a staple genre, in the hands of a revolutionary group of writers with socialist views, who came to be known widely as the 'progressives'/'*taraqqī pasand*' (literally, progress loving). How did such a genre – so bound to social reality and social concerns – respond to discourses of otium? Can a genre evolving through dissatisfactions and disequilibrium of a time respond to emotions of idleness and rest? As the twentieth century advanced, the progressive wave of literary transformations in South Asia was interrupted by the violent partitioning of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. During its developmental stages, the Urdu short story witnessed the powerful changes of the earlier half of the twentieth century. It then went on to negotiate an independent but bifurcated future after the 1947 Partition[239]; the Partition, in fact, had some decisive impact on Urdu language and literature as it became the state language of Pakistan and gradually saw a debatable decline in India. Furthermore, the Partition has been famously captured in literature, particularly Urdu short stories. With such complex factors at play, what significant ways of reading otium can be traced in this genre in South Asia in the middle of the twentieth century?

The short story is, in fact, a fascinating genre for exploring otium, for its negotiations of temporality, especially in its condensed form that enables suspension of continuity. Michael Trussler proposes that "[s]uspending continuity, the short story intimates that the impulse to mold time into a sequential narrative is often incommensurate with our experience of temporality" (1996: 558). This chapter explores the significance of otium as a literary discourse in the emerging genre of the Urdu short story by addressing the negotiation of temporality in the works of two proponents of the genre, Saʿadat Hasan Manto (1912–55) and Qurratulʿain Hyder (1927–2007). The two writers seem to inhabit very different and dissonant spheres compared to each other and to the notions of progress embodied by the Progressive movement in Urdu. Their literary engagements represent two ends of the social spectrum of Urdu-speaking South Asia in the middle of the twentieth century: Manto is famous for his portrayals of the marginalised and the outcastes of society, while Hyder is known for her depictions of the affluent, the cosmopolitan, even the leisured class. Their conceptualisations of otium in the

238 William Warde, "The Short Story: Structure of a New Genre" (1976).

239 'Partition' here refers to the partition of 1947, unless mentioned otherwise.

short stories read in this chapter provide a broad and even dissonant projection of emotional manifestations of leisure and idleness. However dissonant, these conceptualisations of otium influenced specific literary trends in modern Urdu fiction. These varying emotional explorations of otium also present us with ways in which they dealt with the crises that much of their writings draw upon. For Manto, the crisis is manifold as he voraciously wrote to come to terms with the devastating impact of colonial capitalism and the violence of Partition. For Hyder, Partition, national identities, and the duality of the future (as being either Indian or Pakistani) also emerged as conflicts that her literary investments explored throughout her career. This chapter analyses Manto's projection of idleness against the backdrop of colonial capitalism in the emotion of colonial melancholy and Hyder's formulations of leisure against these conflicts of the split and fissured self as post-Partition nostalgia.

Two significant factors shape the formulations of this chapter. One is the contesting, disparate nature of various temporalities conceptualised by Urdu writers, inextricably entangled with the abysmal loss of civilisational pride. The other is the repeated, disparate affective responses they have expressed in literary output. These responses vary from attempts at bridging the pace between the metaphorical ox cart (tradition) and train (modernity)[240], forming a more extensive, pan-Asian, even Afro-Asian, sense of community with suppressed Muslims in other parts of the world, to the forging of the largest literary movement of undivided India, the Progressive Writers' Movement, on the one hand. On the other hand, as this chapter will show, there is also a refusal to bridge the gap; in fact, there is a strong critique of the reading of this gap. It was a time of constant and consecutive struggles – the rise of nationalist, socialist, as well as sectarian sentiments, the fight for political independence from long-standing foreign rule and the unfathomable violence that came with the partition of 1947. Although it may seem irrelevant to analyse literary attitudes to otium in such circumstances, it is perhaps all the more relevant to do so. Otium is, after all, a function of the self and is not restricted to socio-political circumstances alone; it is experienced and expressed individually and collectively in various paradoxical situations.[241] It is all the more relevant to understand the

240 This metaphor is referenced in detail in the following section. It is sufficient to clarify here that the contrasting images of a trudging ox-driven cart and a flashing train were generally used by many reformers and writers of modern South Asia towards emphasising progress (and reform).

241 In fact, the definitions of otium, as understood by the CRC, are based on paradoxical pairings: "tätige Untätigkeit" (active passivity); "produktive Unproduktivität" (productive laziness); "bestimmte Unbestimmtheit" (contoured freedom or limitless limitation). See Fludernik (2020), 17.

various formulations of a concept when it is contested against an influential counterconcept – that of progress or *taraqqī*. Although the concept of progress was highlighted in the mid-late nineteenth century by writers like Hali, as already discussed in Chapter 2, that call for progress was finally responded to in the early-mid twentieth century in recognition of nationalist politics and socialist struggles. Politically, this historical junction is highly significant from the South Asian perspective as it becomes eventually possible for the indigenous population to conceive of a free identity of the self, without which politically, otium cannot be conceived of (as it is intricately linked with the self, being a function of the self). However, the self, at this historical junction, as it attains political independence, also experiences a split in the body politic as colonial India splits into two distinct modern nations. This loss of the self or a loved part of the self and its grieving leads to an emotional experience of melancholy, while recovery, in the aftermath of the Partition, resorts to nostalgia once again. As this book argues, emotions are not felt and expressed universally, and the specificity of the colonial and post-colonial circumstances calls for attention to the specificity of contexts; I, therefore, focus on the variations of colonial melancholy and post-Partition nostalgia.

I read the negotiated formulations of otium against this volatile backdrop by focusing on alternate emotional attitudes toward temporality as depicted in notions of progress. These emotional formulations are manifested in portrayals of drift, idleness, and colonial melancholy in selected stories of Manto and in yearning for an unpartitioned past in the postcolonial and post-Partition nostalgia in the writings of Hyder. My choice is based on the writers' responses towards the PWM,[242] the flagbearer of progress. The movement's objective was to bridge the gaps between the two disparate temporalities: an indigenous pace of life and the impending high speed of life that was fast approaching. Manto and Hyder, in their own ways, resisted these attempts to bridge the gap through the linear trajectory of modern, approaching global 'progress' as propagated by the PWM. Instead, they formulated different affective responses to temporalities in expressions and feelings of idleness and leisureliness. The core writers of the progressive association began adhering to a rigid socialist ideology as an aim for the literature they produced, focusing on the miseries of the peasants, workers, and the impoverished. While Manto emerged as a notorious writer known for his literary engagement with the people at the margins of society, he refused to allow political ideology to determine his literary out-

242 From now on, the Progressive Writers' Movement will be written as PWM and will refer to the progressive movement in Urdu only, unless mentioned otherwise.

put.[243] In this section, I draw the difference between other progressive writers and Manto by focusing on Manto's expression of temporal and emotional dissonance vis-à-vis the function of literature in society. These dissonances are formulated in his stories set in pre-Partition Bombay and their portrayal of idleness; they focus on variations of time as still, encapsulated in the moment, in drift, as aimless strolling/*āvārahgardī*. Manto refutes the acceleration and escalation associated with progress and takes up aimlessness, idle drift or *āvārgī* as a manifestation of colonial melancholy. I read *āvārahgardī* in these stories as distinct from *flânerie*, arguing for its source as the dislocation and despair of the colonial subject in the late 1940s and early to mid-1950s.

Writing a decade or so later, Qurratulʿain Hyder emerged as a literary 'star' but was rather quickly accused of harping on the idle lives of upper-class characters by influential progressives like Ismat Chughtai. A later criticism was her obsession with the past. Her celebrated novel *Āg kā Daryā* (River of Fire, 1959), a sweeping narrative spanning the duration from fourth century BC to post-Partition India and Pakistan, is arguably a masterpiece on re-imagining time; however, it is in her short stories that one can find the repeated quest for an alternate temporality, a quest that resists the impending futures of the two nations while negotiating nostalgia for pre-Independence/Partition with the predicaments of postcoloniality. I read Hyder's turn to memory and nostalgia as a nuanced, affective attempt at dealing with the monstrosity of the Partition, while inculcating an appreciation for the leisureliness of one's past and childhood. This analysis is further explored in a close reading of her selected post-Partition short stories that evoke nostalgia in the realm of childhood – not only through children as characters, protagonists and narrators but also in a metaphorical childhood of shared communities, representing an image of unpartitioned, heterogenous South Asia. Reading this nostalgia as a variation of postcolonial nostalgia, I analyse these short stories, told in the voice of a child narrator, as resisting binaries within conflicts of the past. In the final reading, both writers' attitudes to temporality are seen as essentially different from the mainstream narrative of progress. This chapter addresses these differences to understand the conventional narrative of time as a valued commodity; against this backdrop of accelerating formulations of time, I read Manto's and Hyder's dissonant emotional formulations of time that critique this utilitarian sense of value to locate the literary in alternative notions of temporality. These alternative notions of temporality are contrasted against the hegemonic and historicist

243 The Communist Party of India gradually began to have a strong hold on the functions and roles of writers and artists. For details, see Jalil's sub-topic in the history of the progressive movement, "Political Ramifications of the PWM" (2014), 340–61.

understanding of progressive temporality.[244] Simultaneously, the chapter unpacks the genre innovations in the short story or the *afsānah/kahānī* that inform these formulations of emotions and temporalities.

4.1 Literary and Socio-Political Contexts to the Urdu Short Story

Most literary cultures historically display some form of short fiction or tales, what Shaista Suhrawardy has aptly termed "the tales and fables of the world's childhood" (1945: 203). The genre of the short story, however, is a recent, nineteenth-century invention, developed as a "modern art form" that represents "our own attitude to life" (O'Connor 1963: 13). At the end of the nineteenth century, with the influence of 'realism' on literature[245], modern South Asian writings increasingly resembled and reflected people's attitudes to life. One significant impact of this strain of realism on the literary field was that Urdu, Hindi, and Bangla, among other vernacular literatures, saw a remarkable growth in the short story genre in the early twentieth century.[246] Although Urdu had its variations of short narratives in genres of *qiṣṣa* and *fasānah*, the re-evaluation of literary values, the proliferation of print culture in the late nineteenth century and the undeniable impact of the socio-political events in the early twentieth century provided the suitable circumstances for a new mode of short fiction to emerge (Jalil 2014: 41). The turn of the century saw an increase in translations of English texts into Urdu, exposing readers to Western literature (also French, and Russian literature). Dubrow refers to these global interactions of Urdu in the late-nineteenth century as relevant to the influences on literary developments: "Urdu speakers looked to England, France, Russia, Persia, and Arabia, and, within South Asia, to Bengal, for cultural and literary models" (2018: 8). Simultaneously, since the late-nineteenth century, print journals emerged as the collective platform where new prose genres were experimented with. They

244 See Melina Munz's doctoral dissertation (2020), Chapters 1 and 2.

245 I write 'realism' with caution as such notions – 'realism' and 'romanticism', as Hans Harder has argued, are "classifications originating in Europe that have no easy application to South Asian conditions". See Harder (2022), 419–20. While Harder is accurate in asserting that realism as a literary factor can be witnessed to have firm bearings around the middle of the twentieth century in South Asia, nevertheless, the journey of realism's influence on the literary sphere already began in the nineteenth century. In the Progressive movement in Urdu, it became the clarion call in the late 1930s.

246 Although Bangla short stories were written earlier, at the end of the nineteenth century, with prominent writers like Rabindranath Tagore and Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay as pioneers of the genre. See Anima Bose, "The Bengali Short Story" (1983).

gave emergent writers an easier chance at publication than the full-length novel. Minault (1998), Orsini (2009) and Dubrow (2018) have elaborated on the Urdu print journals of this time as chief players in the determination of a modern literary expansion, particularly concerning the development of modern prose. These scholars also demonstrate that print journalism brought leisurely and enjoyable reading experiences into people's private and public lives in an unprecedented manner.

It is also through a leisurely attitude to prose that the modern short story in Urdu came to be, first, arguably, in the form of humorous sketches published in journals like *Avadh Punch*. The *Avadh Punch* of Lucknow was designed on the model of the English *Punch* (1841), and its motto printed on the first page said *zindagī zindadilī kā hai nām* (the magazine displayed the phrase "Life is pleasure" in English)[247]. The sketches published in it can be seen as the precursor to the short story in Urdu. These sketches tended to isolate a moment or an episode (especially in cases of festival vignettes) or a particular character and aimed at satirising the progressive changes of colonial modernity. They were reminiscent of courtly humour and the aristocratic attitude of the *navāb*s in a vein of "conservative" elitism.[248] The vivid sketches had a wide range, from festival vignettes to ridiculing the participation of women in conferences and meetings (Suhrawardy 1945: 206–9). Due to the elitist and satirical aspects of these sketches, several historians ignore their influence on the development of the short story. Gradually, with the emergence of realism in literature, short fiction began to portray the concerns of the common (wo)man as (s)he became the new subject of literature.

With the turn of the century, immediate political and literary developments had a remarkable impact on the knowledge and reading habits an average reader could acquire. International conflicts like the Russo-Japanese War and later the First World War brought about a political consciousness among people while increasing exposure to print material and Western literature in translation exposed the ordinary reader to a new, vast literary world and an awareness of India's place in it. Khizar Humayun Ansari (2015) directly links the Russian Revolution of 1917 to the emergence of socialist thought among

247 See Mushirul Hasan's exhaustive study of the *Avadh Punch*, titled *Wit and Humour in Colonial North India* (2007). A variable translation of *zindadilī* could range from 'liveliness', 'happiness', 'cheerfulness' to meaning 'pleasurable'. The phrase stresses upon these joyous emotional states in living life/*zindagī*.

248 Harder warns us of generalised reading of satire in the colonial context since, in many cases, the satirists happen to be "conservative and even reactionary"; moreover, the class habitus of such satirical platforms like the *Punch* prototype is also quite complex. See Harder (2013), 10–11.

Urdu-speaking Muslims in North India. The rise of socialism amongst Urdu intelligentsia is neither within our scope nor necessary,[249] although it is sufficient to assert that the early decades of the twentieth century witnessed a turbulent reformulation in the socio-political thought of Urdu-speaking Muslims in particular. These turbulences had a lasting influence on literary attitudes and output. They formed the socio-historical background to the formation of what came to be known as the largest pan-Indian literary movement, the Progressive Writers' Movement, which took the literary imagination of the country by storm, spanning the decades of the 1930s – 50s. While the movement influenced other vernacular literatures of India, such as Bengali, Marathi and Telugu, it emerged out of literary debates in Urdu and left the most remarkable impact on Urdu literature. Jalil (2014), Ansari (2005), and Coppola (2017) propose that this difference was closely connected to the civilisational concerns of Urdu-speaking Muslims after the Rebellion and its seeds were perhaps sown by the early reformists like Syed Ahmed Khan, Hali, and Nazir Ahmad. Ahmad, in a lecture, reportedly urged people not to look back at the aristocratic past, laced with the pace of restfulness and slow life; drawing on the metaphor of an ox cart as opposed to a train, he advised, instead, to embrace progress:

> Think of the train as a symbol of the times (*zamāne kā namūnah*), and we, a drove of oxen. If we cannot appreciate the force of pace and wish to resist it, if we cannot keep up with its pace, or if we do nothing, the train will not spare us. […] Now, you must recognise the velocity of time and identify the group you adhere to. Will you walk on to the train with the slow and measured steps in the style of Lucknowites, resist the train of time, fly away from it, or blindfold the eyes and stuff your ears with cotton? Or will you stand by, quietly, gazing as the train passes over you? (Ahmad 1895: 373)[250]

In the same paragraph, Ahmad also compares time with the technical image of a mill and people who cannot manoeuvre it as living in danger of being ground under the rotation of the mill. An awareness regarding the urgency of progress had already settled in the minds of Muslim intellectuals. The contrast between

249 Numerous literary historians have elaborated upon these historical entanglements. Apart from Jalil, Ansari, and Coppola's elaborate histories on the movement in Urdu, see Suchetana Chattopadhyay, *An Early Communist: Muzaffar Ahmed in Calcutta* (2011) and Kamran Asdar Ali, *Communists in a Muslim Land: Cultural Debates in Pakistan's Early Years* (2011).

250 In a lecture delivered at the eighth anniversary of the Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam, Lahore, in 1893. Here, quoted (translation mine) from *Lekcaron kā Majmuʿah, jild avval* (1895). Jalil (2014) provides a parallel English translation, 37–38.

the two images – the slow ox cart and the shooting pace of a train – signals an irreconcilability. Ahmad's advice was heeded; multiple forces and factors worked together to bring about a consciousness of a pressing temporality driven by acceleration, looking ahead at the future so that the Urdu-speaking, Urdu-reading intelligentsia could match their pace with impending global modernity. The consciousness of pressing temporality is one of the significant factors that gave rise to the literary ethos of progressive socialism and utilitarianism, from which the Urdu short story emerged.

The modern short story in Urdu portrayed the early twentieth century's undeniable social and political conflicts. Few literary histories actually trace the evolution of the Urdu short story *vis-à-vis* print journals, apart from the early work of Suhrawardy (1945). This is perhaps because in its early years, the genre seemed to be, in the words of Muhammad Umar Memon, "sporadic" and "tentative" (2017: x). Sajjad Hyder Yildrim (1888–1942), Qurratulʿain's father, is often considered the first serious writer of the short story in Urdu. However, he penned what is termed "romantic" stories, like "*Ḥikāya-i Lailā va Majnūn*" and "*Khayālistān*". With Yildrim's stories, the Urdu story came to be called a *fasānah*, which then evolved into the modern term for it, *afsānah*.[251] Not too long ago, *fasānah* was the term used for episodical romance adventures written by Rajab Ali Beg Suroor, *Fasānah-i Ajaib*. The term acquired a rhetorical and stylistic change in the voluminous, serialised novel *Fasānah-i Āzād*, composed by Sarshar. The multiple ways in which Urdu writers often used specific genre labels to mean a variety of narrative genres and styles – as with the *nāvil* – is repeated to an extent for the *fasānah/afsānah*, too, but on a much lower scale, since the *afsānah* became standardised as genre label, to mean the modern short story. Khwaja Hasan Nizami and Rashidul Khairi also deserve mention before Premchand arrived at the scene with the modern short story, i.e., *afsānah/kahānī*, infused with an unprecedented streak of realism. The increased accessibility of print journals helped establish the genre. As it became possible for readers to experience a private activity despite a shared, cosmopolitan engagement, the short story claimed its place as a significant genre, "intended to satisfy the standards of the individual, solitary, critical reader" (O'Connor 1963: 14).

Most literary critics and historians like Memon (2017) and Narang (1973) see the genres of the Urdu novel and the short story as distinctly Western (foreign) and different from the existing prose genre of the *dāstān*. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (1973) claims that the short story is not as adept at expressing sub-

251 See Jalil's chapter on the evolution of progressive prose: "From *Fasana* to *Afsana*" (2014), 305.

continental sensibilities as compared to poetry and perhaps the novel.[252] Christina Oesterheld makes an insightful point that more than a 'foreignness', it is the 'schism' between the existing narrative tradition and 'modern' literature which resulted in neglecting existing forms of the *dāstān* and the *qīṣṣa*.[253] She argues that writers introduced new content to existing forms, which then "transformed the structure" of their tales (Oesterheld 2001: 27–28). According to her, the changing content of the new fiction rooted in real, social concerns was the driving force behind the rise of new forms. This transformation is already discussed in Chapter 2. While writers like Nazir Ahmad and Hadi Rusva had already set the novel amid contemporary societal concerns, it was only a matter of time before short fiction would start to embody this pressing sense of reality. Premchand's stories set in rural contemporary India placed real human conflict and concern at the centre of the narrative, making protagonists out of ordinary people. While realism in theme was preferred in short fiction, the gradual but intense awareness of accelerated, escalated notions of temporality also found space in the genre. Narang makes a significant point in mentioning Bengali writers Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chatterjee while discussing the models Premchand had in mind as he revolutionised Urdu short fiction, besides the undebatable Western influences of Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Maupassant (Narang 1973: 113). In addition, the transformation in political thought among North Indian Muslim writers also profoundly impacted the rise of the genre, as we will see in the following section.

4.2 Towards Utilitarian Aspirations: Urdu Short Fiction and the Progressive Ethos

In the early 1930s, the modern Urdu short story emerged in a series of political controversies. These events were triggered by the publication of a provocative collection of nine short stories and a play under the title *Angāre* ('Live Coals' or 'Embers', 1932) authored by a handful of young writers – namely Sajjad Zaheer (1899–1973), Ahmed Ali (1910–94), Rashid Jahan (1905–52) and Mahmuduzzafar (1908–54). The book was loathed as blasphemous in content by both conservative Muslim society as well as the colonial government. Having caused an extraordinary furore, the book was immediately condemned and lawfully ban-

252 See his essay "Afsāne kī Himāyat Meṇ", (1973), 187–94.

253 Although this paper mainly discusses the early novels of Nazir Ahmad, in the introduction Oesterheld addresses the 'alien-ness' that critics associate with modern genres of the novel and short story in Urdu.

ned.[254] Carlo Coppola traces the formation of the '*Angare* group' to Sajjad Zaheer's return to Lucknow from Oxford in 1930 and his meeting with Ahmed Ali. Both young men studied English literature and shared "an admiration for James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence [...] Chekhov and Gorky" (Coppola 2017: 34–35). Zaheer was based in Oxford, where student uprisings against imperialism and a drive towards communism were on the rise. Passionate about literature and social change, the two forged a friendship and discussed the publication of an anthology of their writings with Rashid Jahan, a friend of Ali. The trio were joined by Mahmuduzzafar, who had also returned recently from Oxford. The four writers contributed to the collection titled *Angāre*. The book contains five short stories by Zaheer, two by Ali, a story and a play by Jahan, and one story by Mahmuduzzafar.[255]

The agenda of this publication was not solely a literary one but one that demanded social relevance in literature. Later in life, Ali recalled *Angāre* as a "brave, adolescent book" (Coppola 2017: 56), and Zaheer mentioned it only in passing while writing his monumental memoir of the literary movement which he spearheaded (ibid., 45).[256] The young writers wanted to 'do' something to bring about a change in what they believed to be a literary decay in North India (Premchand was still the only influential writer of realistic fiction). The book was their provocative challenge to society and literature. The themes of these stories centred on the hollow traditions and customs of contemporary conservative Muslim society. They dwelled on conditions of poverty, the social, emotional, and physical oppression of women, and the pretension of piety amongst people. Almost all the stories addressed sexual attraction or oppression in direct ways, which caused most of the uproar. Stylistically, the writers applied various Western techniques: the stream of consciousness (particularly in "*Nīnd Nahīṇ Ātī*" by Zaheer), complexity in gen-

254 The charges were that it "wounded the feelings of the entire Muslim Community by ridiculing God and His Prophets", quoted in a resolution passed by the Central Standing Committee of the All-Shia Conference, reported in *The Hindustan Times* newspaper of 21 February 1933 (*Angāre* was published in November/December of 1932). See Coppola (2017), 48.

255 For a detailed reading and analysis of the stories and play in *Angāre*, see Jalil's chapter "Analysing Angarey" (2014), 108–45.

256 Coppola (2017) refers to Zaheer's memoir of the Progressive Movement and Association, *Rośnāʾī* (*The Light*), in which he hardly mentions or refers to *Angāre* and the Angare group's original intellectual ambitions in its publication. According to Coppola, Ali, on the other hand, was ready to discuss these intellectual and literary desires while writing for *Angāre* and resented the 'ideological interpretation' of these intentions after the first conference in 1936. See Coppola (2017), 54–56.

dering characters (in "*Dulārī*" by Zaheer, both stories by Ali and Jahan) and interior monologue (in "*Mahāvaṭoṇ kī Ek Rāt*" by Ali). These techniques seem to be heavily influenced by James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf (Jalil 2014: 114). Most literary historians concur that the significance of the collection lay not particularly in its literary quality but "in the fact that the book brought together and solidified a group of individuals who would lay the foundation for a movement in Urdu, the so-called Progressive Movement", which would eventually stand as the most influential literary movement in undivided India (Coppola 2017: 56). Another significant impact of the book was that it catapulted the short story to the forefront of Urdu literary consciousness and established short fiction as the genre of 'progressive' prose. While mass hysteria condemned the book, it had tapped into a desire amongst emerging writers to pen realistic and revolutionary short fiction. The movement soon realised and propagated this desire as it gathered momentum.[257]

Zaheer returned to England to continue his studies. Encouraged by fellow communists, he organised an association of Indian writers committed to writing socially engaging and politically motivated literature. A manifesto was drafted by Mulk Raj Anand to "formulate the aims and objects" of the association. Simultaneously, "little groups" (formed of young Indian writers) often seen to meet and talk in "cafes and garrets of Bloomsbury" joined together on 24th November 1934 and "formed the Indian Progressive Writers Association" (Coppola 2017: 78). While the movement was officially established in India in 1936, preceding events in Europe had a significant role in its formation.[258] Zaheer was in correspondence with Premchand, who had published a finalised version of the manifesto[259] in his prominent Hindi literary journal *Haṃs* in

257 The Urdu progressive movement produced numerous short story writers, some of the most renowned names being Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chander, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, and Ismat Chughtai.

258 The events of Moscow (the first congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934), London (formation of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association in 1934) and Paris (Zaheer and Anand's attendance at the International Congress for the Defence of Culture held on 26 June 1935) are undeniable. This "European Phase", claims Coppola, is distinctly significant to the formation of the association in India and once again, Zaheer underplays these events and their impacts in his memoir.

259 Initially, there were two versions; one was published in the *Left Review* in London, which was revised to remove Marxist jargon for an Indian readership. There was also a third version of the manifesto, an amended version adopted by the second congress of AIPWA held in Calcutta in 1938. See Ansari (2005), Coppola (2017), and Jalil (2014) for details of these different versions.

October 1935.[260] He also presided over the first meeting of freshly formed All-India Progressive Writers' Association[261], held in Lucknow in 1936. His close involvement in the movement drew a large number of literary stalwarts and their concurrence with the principles of the movement.[262] I now turn to two documents related to the formation of the PWM that will clarify the practical contributions the association sought from its members. The fiery twenty-three-year-old multilingual scholar and writer Akhtar Husain Raipuri wrote an essay titled "Adab aur Zindagī" (Literature and Life) that was published in July 1935 in the esteemed literary journal *Urdū*. It is a remarkable documentation and can be seen as the source of the principles by which the movement was fueled. Drawing on 'ethical' theories as propagated by Tolstoy and Gorky, Husain's main argument was that 'true literature' is created by the class that advances the techniques of production. For the first time, literature was seen as an aspect of the economic life of a society or community.[263] He criticised writers of the past for lamenting over the impermanence of life and harping on feelings of helplessness, asserting that "though literature derives from the past and the present, what it pre-eminently seeks is the future". Coppola compares Premchand's inaugural speech at the first congress of the AIPWA, titled "Sāhitya kā Uddeśya" (in Hindi) or in Urdu, "Adab kī Ġarẓ-o-Ġāyāt" (The purpose and purview of literature) and draws striking similarities to Raipuri's essay (Coppola 2017: 135–42). The most important tenets of the movement, as addressed by Raipuri, were now voiced by the esteemed Premchand and established as the force behind the movement.

Another speech at this first congress, delivered by Ahmed Ali, titled "A Progressive View of Art",[264] also clearly shows the influences of Raipuri's essay while harking back to Nazir Ahmad's understanding of the temporal junction at which Muslim society in North India stood. Ali proposed that at present, society was "standing against a wall", witnessing a "fully equipped and mechanised army marching" towards it; "If we stand and stolidly stare at the black

260 See Coppola for differences in these two versions vis-à-vis commitment to Marxist-Leninist principles and political rhetoric, wider appeal, etc. (2017), 80–83.

261 From now on, written as AIPWA.

262 Although there was reportedly a real difficulty in drawing Hindi writers to what was understood as an Urdu literary conference.

263 An abridged translation of the extended essay is provided by Adeem Suhail, published as "Literature and Life" (2010), 127. For a detailed discussion of this essay, see Coppola (2017), 118–35.

264 Published in Sudhi Pradhan, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: 1936–1947, Vol I* (1979), 67–83.

mass advancing on us, soon we shall be pounded to death. The only alternative is to brave the storm" (Ali 1979: 67). Proposing to "assess the value of art", he explicated that art is rooted in and derives from life; it acts by imparting powerful emotion, leading to action of the "progressive type" (Ali 1979: 67–68). Ali tried to define art and discuss the meaning of 'progress'; he critiques contemporary artists, especially Tagore and Iqbal, whose works he finds lacking social relevance. Defining "progressivism", he clarifies that it should not be taken to mean "revolutionary", but it entails "trying for the betterment of our social life", "banishment of mysticism and all that which stands in our way of attaining freedom". Tagore is criticised in the essay for the "defeatist and mystical tendencies" of his poetry, while Iqbal's poetry is assessed to be "Utopian" in his dreams of pan-Islamism: weeping, denouncing, singing of "the ancient Bulbul and the Rose" (Ali 1979: 79–80). Ali then expounded upon the need of the hour: "what we want today is progressive literature. We do not even want reformist literature" (Ali 1979: 80). He emphasises that India is *now* a part of the world market and that "it has got to come in a line with all the industrially advanced countries of the world". He highlighted the demands of advancement and acceleration, emphasising that "we cannot walk backwards; therefore we must go ahead" (Ali 1979: 79).

In briefly summarising these two influential documents related to the progressive movement in India, the aim has been to draw out a fair understanding of the futuristic, utilitarian aspirations for the core members of the association at this time. In its utilitarian possibilities, progress was understood as something that would improve the lives of the millions and bring positive social transformation. Progress had the appeal of an emotional concept; it linked writers to the larger population at a time when parallel struggles for political independence were at their peak. For the first time, social transformation, a drive to uplift the masses, was intricately linked to literature and the arts. This emotional attitude to progress is affectively expressed in the Urdu names of the association – *Anjuman-i Taraqqī Pasand Muṣannifīn*, i.e., an association of progress-loving writers. In its futuristic ambitions, the progressives saw time in the dialectic of the past and the future as a recurrent motif. Constantly conscious of having lost valuable time, in attempting to advance, to speed up and accelerate India's arrival on the modern stage of the (Western) world, progressive writers constantly marched towards an accelerated temporality. Urdu literature had a central role in this understanding of historicist time. It was seen as a major aspect of civilisation that would speed up the arrival of Muslim society on the global stage of modernity. The future demanded all attention and action, and the only way to do so, for them, was by hurrying the present so as not to be left in the "waiting room of history" (to borrow the phrase from Dipesh Chakraborty). I now turn to the criticism of this

progressive attitude to temporality, voiced by both Manto and Hyder in their formulation of dissonant emotional responses. These two writers posited alternate ways of conceptualising and feeling time. This is not to say that Manto and Hyder were against a progressive society, only that they did not see literature taking up the utilitarian task of causing that progress or transformation, neither in its utilitarian aspirations nor its futuristic ambitions. They explored, instead, the deep anxieties of melancholy and sighs of nostalgia for the rapidly transforming South Asian consciousness in the face of this utilitarian ethos and in the aftermath of the historic rupture.

4.3 Saʿadat Hasan Manto's Portrayal of Urban Idleness

Saʿadat Hasan was born in Ludhiana, Punjab, to a Kashmiri family. His father, Ghulam Hasan, was a lawyer and a strict follower of Islam; he took up the elementary education of his youngest son, Saʿadat, educating him in Arabic, Persian, English, and Urdu. Historian Ayesha Jalal writes that young Saʿadat could not forge an amicable relationship with his father. However, the figure of Ghulam Hasan loomed large over Saʿadat's life (Jalal 2013: 45). He began his formal education at the Muslim Anglo-Oriental High School, often failed his exams, and reportedly spent his time loafing around the streets of Amritsar, dabbling in photography. Growing up, he earned the reputation of "a slacker, gambler, drinker of alcohol, and inveterate prankster with an interest in occult, an entirely unworthy son of an honourable father" (Jalal 2013: 33). With rising anti-British sentiment in Punjab, Saʿadat was fascinated by the revolutionary figure Bhagat Singh. He later joined Hindu Sabha College, an institution infused with anti-colonial enthusiasm since the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919. Along with his school friends, Saʿadat dreamed of becoming a revolutionary (Jalal 2013: 36); the young men were also drawn to photography and cinema. These dreams and aspirations eventually proved integral to Manto's art of fiction, as his literary career became intertwined with his later adventures in the Bombay cinema circles.[265] He was an avid reader and spent much time surveying European fiction. This drift of youth was transformed when he met the footloose journalist and historian Abdul Bari Alig in 1933. A committed socialist, Bari inculcated a taste for politics in young Saʿadat; he also encouraged Saʿadat to write short pieces on films and translate Russian and French stories from English to Urdu. He translated *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* by Victor Hugo. Next, along with Abbas,

265 See Manto's sketches of celebrities in the Bombay film industry, *Stars from Another Sky* (1998).

he translated *Vera* by Oscar Wilde and was briefly imprisoned for the seditious posters of the same (Jalal 2013: 41). One of his early translations was published in the journal *Humāyūṇ*, and Saʿadat gradually began to be recognised in reading circles as Manto.

He was fascinated by the work of European writers like Gorky, Chekhov, Hugo, and particularly, Maupassant (Jalal 2013: 45). While years of translating European stories would have taught him much about writing in the genre, turning in regular pieces on films gave him insights into composing prose on visual art and cinematography. Manto's first original short story, titled "*Tamāśā*" (Spectacle, 1934), a satirical recounting of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, was published in a weekly literary journal, *Khalq*. He also translated many Russian short stories from English to Urdu for the special issue, "Raśian Nambar", in the journal *ʿĀlamgīr*. Bari also persuaded him to compile a translated collection of Russian short stories, which was published under the title *Rūsī Afsāne* (1934). Influenced by Russian fiction, Manto's interest in the lives of marginalised people and his engagement with the sordid, harsh realities of life concur with the original thought of progressive writers, particularly the authors of *Angāre*. While Jalal dismisses the influence of the progressives on Manto, Rakhshanda Jalil and Khalilur Rahman Azmi categorize his prose as 'progressive' and suggest a strong link between his engagement with "low life" and "early exposure to Russian writers" (Jalil 2014: 311). Azmi quotes from Manto's essay on Gorky and highlights the particularity of style that Manto emphasises:

> Before writing his stories, Gorky looks all around him and observes the smallest, most trivial details as though it might be of use somewhere. The hotness of the sauce, the snow sticking to the man's boots, the snowflakes entangled in the hair of some woman, the woodcutter cutting wood, the coarse language of the farmhands, the drifting notes of a piano, the bestial glint in the eyes of a sentry, the dirt flying in the bazaars, and the black smoke billowing from the chimneys of factories – he notes down all this and more. (Quoted in Jalil 2014: 311)[266]

While inspiration from writers like Gorky and Maupassant left a lasting impact on Manto's writing, his decision to move to Aligarh and join the University in 1934 exposed him to the contemporary currents of the progressive movement. Aligarh was a hotbed of socialist and progressive discourses with the rise of the PWA. Akhtar Husain Raipuri, Asrar-ul-Haq Majaz, Jan Nisar Akhtar, and Ale Ahmed Suroor, to name a handful, were some of the enthusiastic and illustrious

266 I have retained Jalil's translation here since it is close to my own, and English readers can easily access it in its context. For the Urdu original, see ʿĀżmī, *Urdu meṇ Taraqqī Pasand Adabī Taḥrīk* (1984 [1957]), 188.

progressives already present at Aligarh. Leslie Flemming observes that although Manto did not participate in socialist or leftist politics directly, "the atmosphere there encouraged him in both his literary activities and his revolutionary inclinations" (1979: 7). His inspired early story, "*Inqalāb Pasand*" (Revolutionary or Revolution-loving) was published in 1935 in the *ʿAlīgaṛh Maigzīn*. Soon, in 1936, his first collection of short stories, titled *Ātaś Pāre* (Sparks), was published. The impact *Angāre* had on his choice of title is indisputable.

4.3.1 A Critique of Progressive Temporality: Moment, Lingering, and Drift

In her micro-historical account of Manto's life and literature *vis-à-vis* the 1947 Partition, Jalal writes that the conflicting relationship he had with his father and affectionate mother "served as a catalyst for Saʿadat's rebellious nature" (2013: 32). Other scholars and reviewers of Manto's work have often found it relevant, even imperative to discuss his psychological traits as the key to his art (Hanafi 2012; Hashmi 2012). Manto famously wrote his own epitaph, sarcastically boasting that with him are buried forever "all the secrets and mysteries of the art of writing stories"[267] (Jalal 2013: 210), thereby challenging his readers and critics to unravel the psychological predicaments of his literary work. Records of social or professional, even familial encounters with Manto are also often personal in tone and emotional in nature, suggesting that his behaviour and mannerisms deeply impacted the people he interacted with.[268] These observations call for an emotional enquiry into Manto's works. His stories embody an emotional range that is unprecedented in Urdu fiction. The characters are fascinatingly complex, yet not as 'abnormal' as some critics and 'progressives' claimed; they are rather multidimensional and, I argue, also depicted as in conflict with the modern. In Manto's stories, the human is as much an object to modern life's subjugation as (s)he is a purveyor of her/his journey.[269] Intense emotions of love and hate, kindness and violence are depicted as felt and expressed by characters according to their precarious circumstances and explored in their extreme potentials within the singled-out *event* of the story. In vivid portrayals of the human as the almighty and simultaneously equally helpless, Manto presents his scepticism regarding

267 "Us ke sīne meṉ fan-i afsāna-nigārī ke sāre asrār va rumūz dafn haiṉ".

268 See, for example, a collection of reminiscences and documents on Manto by his friends, colleagues and rivals, *Manto-Saheb: Friends and Enemies on the Great Maverick* (2018), translated from original Urdu letters and memoirs into English by Vibha Chauhan and Khalid Alvi.

269 Also see Gyan Prakash, *Mumbai Fables* (2010), 124.

notions of collective 'progress' championed by the progressives. In his view, progress for all was desirable but was not the social reality; neither was a rush towards progressive temporality meaningful nor possible. Historians like Azmi and Jalil argue that Manto was a progressive of the highest order because of the socially engaged literature he wrote. I don't differ from this view; my argument is that Manto rejected the label and the ethos of 'progress' propagated by the association. His relationship with the lexeme as a concept and its semantic and rhetorical relevance are to be read with much nuance, in reference to his works. Rather than a singularly linear notion of progress that his contemporaries aimed for, Manto's ethos is conveyed in the portrayal of drift, in waiting, lingering in the moment. This is evident in his works, especially in the stories written during his conflicts with the PWM.

Much of this resistance to progressive temporality and utility can be unpacked in Manto's portrayal of protagonists, who refuse to become identified only as 'workers', one of the hungry and poor masses. Frank O'Connor claims that the modern short story does not have a hero, but instead, it dwells on "a submerged population group" (1963: 18). Flemming identifies Manto's characters and protagonists as belonging to this group (1979: 35) as subjects of low life in modern urban colonial-postcolonial circumstances, they seek and dream of 'escape'. Their lives are confined to the motion of idle drift; escape is mostly not an option. In the process of drifting, they stroll the streets idly; they reject accelerated formulations of time and fashion themselves and their own trajectories. They experience and reflect that solitary quality of modern life, in O'Connor's words, "an intense awareness of human loneliness" (1963: 19), vibrantly portrayed against the backdrop of modern urbanity. In these solitary journeys of his protagonists, made up of the 'submerged population', Manto writes of the recesses of modern urban alienated life, as Flemming aptly traces, in "another lonely voice".[270]

A detailed study of Manto's affective trajectories would require extensive research on the massive collection of his stories, essays, sketches, and letters. Such a study is beyond the scope of this chapter. For our purposes, it suffices to focus on the two complementary aspects of his work – a modernist drift and a lingering in the moment vis-à-vis a critique of progressive temporality on the one hand. On the other hand, an emotional manifestation of colonial melancholy in relation to idleness and indolence in some of his characters is undeniable. While the drift is both a recognition of a global, cosmopolitan, modernist predicament in the wake of the twentieth century that shares the critique of

270 Reference to the title of Leslie Flemming's book on Manto, *Another Lonely Voice: The Urdu Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto* (1979).

European modernists like Joyce, Lawrence, and Hemingway, the idleness and vagrancy of his characters embody a melancholia symptomatic of the colonial subject with critical agency. An interweaving of both can be read in his pre-Partition stories, primarily set in Bombay. Writing the metropolis, Manto formulates sensual and sensory depictions as arresting in the urban hustle and bustle of the sprawling city, allowing his characters to dwell in the moment amidst the urban chaos, in what Julia Kristeva reads as the "melancholy moment".[271] In depicting human interactions as an extension of the 'self-fashioning' street, Manto responds to both the drift of urban cosmopolitanism as well as the solitary moment experienced by the individual. Excellent examples are the description of loners smoking and strolling aimlessly near Apollo Bunder in the story "*Bānjh*" (Barren). Sensory and visual narrations are masterfully achieved in descriptions of the street; the weather, atmosphere, and the titillating tactility of flesh for the young boy Masud in "*Dhūʾāṉ*" (Smoke); and the intimate, crisp descriptions of the physical and emotional world of the sex-worker, Saugandhi, in "*Hatak*" (Insult).

In a masterful narration of a single night, a sensory, emotional, and psychological unravelling of the intensity and mystery of human desire is seen in "*Bū*" (Odour), for which he was charged with vulgarity. The story probes into the interstices of human behaviour, memory, and sensual desire in a complex narrative. The recently wedded protagonist, Randhir, is obsessed with the earthy scent of a low-caste girl he had once made love to, as he now tries to make love to his wife. Randhir is confused by this strange, intense, sensual desire he has never experienced before. The story explores desire and vulnerability in an intimate and curious tone, between flashback and flash forward, the pace being interrupted and magnified with the sensory – the memory of human scent and the commemoration of monsoon rains. The structure of the narrative is controlled by the sensory and the emotional. In "*Bū*", time is controlled by evoking the senses and the sensorial. The girl's scent is described as neither pleasant nor unpleasant but inexplicably powerful. In remembrance of the night, Randhir recalled the scent that had bound them together: "the two were merged into each other, into the depths of an animal existence, so that they lingered in a state of pleasure which was eternal despite being momentary; which had a transcendental intoxication but also a sense of quiet calm. Together, they had transformed into a bird flying so high in the sky that it seemed motionless" (Manto 1983: 55).[272] Such poignant narrations of isolated

271 *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1987). Here, quoted in Trussler (1996), 564–65.

272 From the collection *Laẕẓat-i Sang* (1983).

moments, crafted against the backdrop of Bombay's chaotic din, make Manto an inimitable writer of the city, its people, and their emotional and temporal landscapes while capturing the stillness of their lonely lives.

Manto moved to Bombay in 1936, editing the weekly journal *Muṣavvar*. He also rekindled his interest in cinema and found employment as a writer of dialogues in several firms. It was a time of intense creativity, as he juggled editing journals, wrote dialogues for films and the radio (from 1940 onwards), and penned his early short stories. Bombay, at this time, was teeming with progressive luminaries. Manto was initially closely associated with Sardar Jafri; later, he had a circle of progressive friends – Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chander, and Ismat Chughtai. Manto's close friend and poet, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, was also a strong proponent of the AIPWA. Manto was never really a part of the official association due to his inability to commit to ideological impositions on literature. As the movement began to follow strict principles of socialism as the sole goal of literature and started impinging upon authors' creativity, many early progressives faced dilemmas in trying to retain a harmonious relationship between their art and ideology. Gradually, the terms progressive (*taraqqī pasand*) or progressive literature (*taraqqī pasand adab*) came to embody an exclusive ideological groupism, allegedly lacking self-reflection and self-criticism. These attitudes were far removed from the original conceptualisation of progress articulated by Premchand, Raipuri, Ali, and Zaheer.[273] Zaheer, Ali, and Jafri criticised Manto's work on 'obscenity' and 'perversion' charges.[274] Manto wrote an early satirical story titled "*Taraqqī Pasand*" (published in 1941 in the collection *Dhūʾāṇ*), which I now analyse to unpack his criticism of progressive writers and their notions of progress. Flemming asserts that it is not a serious criticism but a friendly rib at the association (1979: 46), while Jalil describes the story as "wickedly funny" (2014: 312). I argue that it is his early expression of discomfort and unwillingness to commit to the association. I analyse and interpret the story as his critique of the restrictive underpinnings of progressivism in both its utilitarian aspect and futuristic temporality.

The story is woven around the relationship between an aspirational young writer, Joginder Singh, and a senior progressive writer, Harindranath Tripathi. The deeper implication of this relationship is between realism and hollow, arrogant ideology. The haughty seriousness of Singh's conversations with Tripathi

273 As mentioned before, even within the core members of the association, like Ali and Zaheer, discrepancies between the movement's aspirations and ambitions were apparent.

274 See Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light* (2006), 252. Also, see Ahmed Ali's essay in the collection *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature, Vol I*, (1974), 40.

are pitted against Singh's dismissive dialogues with his wife. A mere clerk at a local post office, Singh aspires to acquaint himself with serious progressive writers. He often invites them to his home; his wife overhears their conversations and notes that they frequently mention the phrase '*taraqqī pasand*'. On asking her husband about it, she is told in sombre tones that it means someone who likes progress, "It is a Persian word, and in English, it is called 'radical'". Singh's wife, Amrit Kaur, is crestfallen – she had imagined 'progressive' to mean something grand, something substantial. By contrasting and satirising these perceptions of 'progress' for the progressive writer and his wife, Manto sarcastically jabs at the ideological shortcoming of 'socially relevant literature' propagated by the progressives. That the progressive movement in Urdu was an overwhelmingly masculine one, and that women's equality was only theorised upon but hardly paid any real attention to, has been heavily critiqued by core progressive writers like Rashid Jahan.[275]

Singh invites Tripathi, whom he considers to be a great writer, poet, and traveller. Tripathi accepts the invitation readily and brings his wife and daughter as well. After intense discussion of each other's works for two days, in a comical description of the progressive passing of time in days, the narrator comments that until the fourth day, Singh is mesmerised by Tripathi's knowledge, his personality, his beard, and even his squint. On the fifth day, Tripathi reads his own stories aloud, and continues until the tenth day, when, finally, Singh is tired of listening to Tripathi's endless string of stories. When twenty days pass by and Singh becomes restless and impatient. Exasperated and missing the company of his wife, whom he had not seen due to his exaggerated hospitality, he decided to meet her in secret. He waits in the silent chilly field under a starry sky for time to pass, waiting for the clock to strike twelve, when he would go to meet his wife. Finally, on knocking on the door, it opens, and Tripathi responds, "You are early! This is wonderful! I have just finished writing a story; come listen to it" (from *Dhū'āṉ,* 1981: 33).

Critics have commented that this naughty joke was written to tease Rajinder Singh Bedi and Devendranath Satyarthi. Nevertheless, a critical and close reading of it can help us understand Manto's on-and-off relationship with the association and his scepticism towards progressive temporality and ethos. A critique of clock time, the binding notion of a hegemonic duration of time, and the futility of the linear, progressive passing of days seeking transformation are recurrent themes and resistive projection of temporality in many of his stories. Jennifer Dubrow has already asserted this critique of clock-time and

275 Jahan quoted in Zaheer's *The Light*, 231. See also Noor, "Negotiating Nostalgia" (2020), 7–8.

"temporal regimes that underpin the nation" (2019: 2) in Manto's work. Dubrow's reading of Manto's criticism of this temporality emerges from her reading of the clock and clock time as a symbol of modernity. In "*Taraqqī Pasand*", Manto criticises progressive temporality by employing a deliberate countdown of the days after the visit of Tripathi as opposed to before it. In fact, the criticism is so blunt that it approaches the absurd in repeated counting of the progressing number of days vis-à-vis Joginder Sing's impatience and boredom, culminating in the count down to hours, minutes, and seconds; "*cār sard ghanṭe*" (four cold hours), "*do minaṭ*" (two minutes), "*pāṉc sekanḍ*" (five seconds) before the anticlimactic end. This critique is noticeable in his stories, where time is a profoundly emotional and individual experience for his characters. This individuality of his works was not taken well by his progressive colleagues, who rushed to accuse him of obscenity.[276]

Six of Manto's stories were charged with obscenity, three in India before 1947: "*Dhū'āṉ*" (Smoke), "*Bū*" (Odour) and "*Kālī Śalvār*" (Black Veil); and three in Pakistan afterwards: "*Khol do*" (Open it), "*Ṭhanḍā Gośt*" (Cold Meat) and "*Ūpar Nīce aur Darmiyān*" (Upstairs, Downstairs and in Between). Ironically, Zaheer and Ali, having authored *Angāre*, thought Manto's exploration of sexual desire and curiosity to be obscene and perverted. His stories are narrated with a quest to explore the mysteries of human life and emotions, presented in a style of modern prose that was unprecedented in Urdu. In these depictions, we see a palpable image of modern life, rendered with a deep sense of compassion, reflection, and an acknowledgement of the individual's temporal frames as intricately associated with their emotional make up. Flemming sums it up: Manto "believed strongly in the need for literature to reflect" realistically, the changing social conditions, although he did not accept the idea that "literature could provide solutions to the problems" (1979: 33). His close interaction with the progressives gave him a profound understanding of his views on literature. As he roamed the streets of Bombay, he saw the subject of his art as adrift as he was. Priyamvada Gopal and other scholars have read Manto's 'obscene' stories in the light of masculine sexuality. While sexuality has been a much-studied theme in Manto's stories, the psychological and emotional mapping of gendered bodies in his stories has hardly drawn enough attention. I now turn to some of his Bombay stories concerning idleness, uselessness, and colonial melancholy, an extension of the reflective and critical drift Manto portrayed as *āvārahgardī* or *āvārgī*, in the figure of his *āvārah*/wandering protagonists.

276 See Flemming's reading of Sardar Jaffri's criticism of Manto's story "*Bū*" (1979), 28–29.

4.3.2 Colonial Melancholy, Social Critique, and *āvārahgardī*

"Es gibt zwar eine Melancholie ohne Muße, doch keine Muße ohne Melancholie"
Jörg Zirfas[277]

Melancholia has been explored as a politics of affect in relation to colonialism and empire in recent times. In her seminal work on psychoanalysis and colonialism, *Dark Continents* (2003), Ranjana Khanna derives "colonial melancholy" as a critical form of protest registered by the colonised as a response to unmourned love. Paul Gilroy, in his book *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2004), argues that much of the political conflicts characterising contemporary multicultural societies can be analysed better in the light of overlooked imperial and colonial histories to address the grim realisation of unfathomable colonial atrocities. Both scholars understand melancholia from the works of Sigmund Freud and Frantz Fanon. Khanna also draws upon the works of Octave Mannoni and Antoine Porot in this context. Freud defines melancholia in relation to mourning and loss in his 1917 essay as unsuccessful mourning.[278] Both mourning and melancholia are responses to the loss of a loved one, of home (country), or of some ideal, like liberty. They are similar in symptoms of "profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity", and a distinctive "lowering of the self-regarding feelings" (Freud 1971: 244). In the case of melancholia, however, the loss is of "a more ideal kind"; and although the loved object might not have actually died, it is lost as "an object of love" (Freud 1971: 245) and the one who loses, is often not aware of *what* has been lost. In melancholia, unlike in mourning, the loss can be "withdrawn from consciousness" (ibid.). The loss is then often suffered without any conscious association with the cause. Herein lies the disjunct and difference between melancholia and nostalgia – while nostalgia is a conscious grieving after loss, expressed in longing and yearning, a hope that is projected onto the lost past, melancholia, on the other hand, is an expression of hopelessness and dejection projected onto the present, emerging out of unsuccessful or unprocessed grief in the aftermath of loss. Freud and Khanna use the terminology of ingestion in response to loss. While in mourning, the ingested loss is slowly digested, the ego is absorbed with the lapse of time and the mourner is liberated after the work of mourning is done; in melancholia, the devoured loss is incorporated but not digested. It remains elusive, gives rise to a 'critical agency', and causes an

277 Although there may be melancholy without idleness, there is no idleness without melancholy. Wulf & Zirfas eds., *Muße: Paragrana* (2007), 146.

278 "Mourning and Melancholia" (1971), 243–58.

impoverishment of ego. Mourning remains unsuccessful in the melancholic subject and may transform into 'mania'. The self is in conflict with the lost object, which has become a part of the self, and the critique is also directed towards the self. To turn to the emotional parsing of colonial melancholy, Khanna interprets it (from the concept of 'pseudo-melancholy' theorised by Antoine Porot) as a feeling in residual abundance in the colonies of Europe. She formulates this feeling as a "politics of affect" and "a form of individuated critique" that requires understanding psychoanalysis in light of colonialism, neocolonialism, and nationalism (Khanna 2003: xii).

Here, I tease out the critique of the aforementioned nationalist concept of progress, manifest in colonial melancholy; this is not a far-fetched notion, nor a contradictory one, as particularly in the historical junction of these stories, one observes several complex pairings; progress, in its developmental form, is paired with hopes of nationalist progress, attempting to match up to the 'global market', as suggested by Ahmed Ali. Simultaneously, the economic progress of metropolitan cities of the empire, like Bombay, was still driven by forces of colonial capitalism, and although colonial enterprise could be argued as retreating by this time, the forces of colonial capitalism after the bankruptcy of the world wars were responsible, to a great extent, for the precarious poverty and marginalisation of the poor in the erstwhile empire.[279] The potential of idleness or otium as a source of societal critique has been foregrounded in the dichotomy between social destiny ("gesellschaftlicher Bestimmung") and one's own subject consciousness ("eigenem Subjektbewusstsein") (Dobler 2020: 309). Leisure or the opportunity for leisure or idleness has also been attributed to the cultivation of art and discovery of sciences, even the "liberation of the oppressed" (Russell 1935: 26). Notwithstanding the significance of Bertrand Russell's essay, his emphasis on the curiosity of the few and the simplicity of the ordinary demonstrate a great gap in the perception of critique and its manifestations amongst the oppressed, especially those of the empire. Reading colonial melancholy in these stories leads to a deeper understanding of Manto's portrayal of idleness and vagrancy as expressions of deep-seated critique, narrated through the voice of an itinerant, seemingly *flâneur*-like figure with a roving eye. But reading Manto's portrayals of idle wandering in the colonial urban scape – in his terms, *āvārahgardī* – as *flânerie* is to take away from his formulations of the emotional make up of an itinerant wanderer, an *āvārah*.

279 The number of Manto's stories that can be read against the backdrop of colonial atrocity and nationalist savagery is impressive. "*Tamāśā*", "*1919 kī Bāt*", "*Nayā Qānūn*", "*Tobah Ṭek Singh*" are only a few to name. On colonial capitalism, see Alatas, already discussed in the Introduction.

My argument stems from the origins of the *flâneur* in the streets of Paris, its source being the wandering European male gaze. In fact, an exploration of colonial melancholy in Manto's *āvārah* protagonist can give us a complex but necessary understanding of the *āvārah* vis-à-vis the *flâneur*. The *flâneur* has been hailed as the 'prince' incognito, who observes and reads the city in his idleness.[280] While I study the postcolonial negotiation of the *flâneur* in the figure of the Bengali bhadralok detective in the next chapter, Manto's protagonists hardly fit the bill for a Benjaminian, investigative pursuit of the city. Returning to the emotional exploration of melancholia in the works of Freud and Khanna, it is an emotion that suffers the loss of love, interest, and self-regard. Particularly against the backdrop of colonial capitalism, it would be a fallacy to read the *āvārah* of Manto's short stories in the vein of European notions of *flânerie*. The term *āvārahgardī*, a complex noun formed from the Persian lexeme *āvārah*, implies being "lost, annihilated; ruined; scattered; […] an exile, outcast, vagabond, vagrant".[281] The compound '*āvārah śūdan*' means "to be oppressed, injured" and "*āvārah gardīdan*", "to roam, to wander" (Steingass 1892: 117). Likewise, "*āvārgī*" is vagrancy or wretchedness. Avishek Ray demonstrates the constructedness around the figure of the vagabond in modern India as historically ruptured, and that the negative cultural baggage associated with the figure to be a "product of a specific Western-utilitarian value system" and that its historical significance does not sit well with a universalisation of the concept (2022: 1–2). While *āvārahgardī* may have acquired a sense of cosmopolitan wandering in very recent times owing to the romanticism associated with multifaceted histories of South Asian cities like Lahore or Delhi, the emotional component of an *āvārah* is of desolation and displacement, which further ascertains the need to read colonial melancholy vis-à-vis *āvārahgardī*.

Recommending caution against reading *āvārah* protagonists of his fiction uncritically as *flâneurs*, I do not suggest that Manto is not one; despite his close association with many characters who people his stories, it is important to distinguish between the writer and the narrator. The argument here is that reading the *āvārah* of Manto's stories can substantially broaden our understanding of the practice of itinerant, footloose, and aimless wandering beyond the European lexeme. In reading the aimless strolling on the streets of Lahore, Anna Suvorova remarks that Lahore's streets are full of *flâneurs* "in spite of the fact that the Urdu and Punjabi languages […] do not have a precise equivalent of this notion" (2011: 141–42). I do not argue that *āvārgī* is the equivalent, but simply that concepts like

280 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (1983 [1969]).

281 Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (1892), 117.

āvārgī, or *āvārahgardī*, and other such expressions of vagrancy or travelling/wandering pack various kinds of mobility pertaining to the context of South Asia that have a wide emotional range, and a variety of contexts specific to region, language, and spiritual backgrounds.[282] In the context of the stories I read here, *āvārahgardī* embodies the manifestation of colonial melancholy through the physicality of idleness. In his cultural history of urban Bombay, Gyan Prakash writes of Manto's *flânerie* and depiction of montage in the streets of the cosmopolitan city: "He was a classic flâneur, writing about the everyday experiences of the people who lived in the neighbourhood. […] he sketched modern urban life in sparkling prose" (Prakash 2010: 121). While Prakash's claims of Manto's *flânerie* are aided by his quotation from the story "*Mammad Bhā'ī*" (brother Mohammad; colloquially, 'Mammad'), the narratorial voice needs further investigation to ascertain such claims. While the opening lines of the story reveal an observant gaze, the narrator (named Manto) expresses an utter lack of knowledge – or even care – about several aspects and people in the neighbourhood, like what the Chinese inhabitants of the neighbourhood do or what rates are charged by the prostitutes. He also reveals that he has been unable to see Mammad Bhai because he leaves for work early in the morning and only returns late every night; he has no leisure. While this does not take away from Manto the writer's *flânerie*, it is imperative to differentiate between the creative *flânerie* of the writer and the portrayed aimless strolling and idle observations of his narrators and characters. I read the idleness of the protagonists of Manto's Bombay stories as manifested in colonial melancholy. This reading then helps us unpack the figure of the *āvārah* in its mid-twentieth-century context.

To unpack colonial melancholy, I now turn to Khanna's definition, which she derived from Porot's depreciative colonial-psychological terminology. Antoine Porot, a highly influential French psychiatrist working in Algiers, asserted that the brutal violence amongst native Muslim men in North Africa resulted from a naturally violent constitution they seemed to have that he reported as an odd form of melancholy, leading them to violence rather than suicide or introspection as it did in Europe. He termed this 'pseudomelancholy'. Porot and other colonial psychiatrists' work in North Africa has been discussed in a vaguely critical manner by Frantz Fanon (1964). In his essay "The North-African Syndrome", Fanon also elaborated upon the characteristic morbidity and melancholy of the North African/Arab with the loss of the ideal of home and country (1964: 15). Khanna builds upon this basis of psychiatry to address morbidity and melancholy in the colonies, using Freud's theory of 'critical agency' to assert that the "idea of

282 See, for instance, a detailed exploration of the vagabond in Bengal's premodern, modern, and colonial history by Avishek Ray (2022).

pseudomelancholy can be read psychoanalytically against the grain to understand the affect of coloniality" (2003: 152). She claims that the works of colonial psychiatrists like Porot were in 'denial' of the affective expressions of "political rebellion", "protest", and "moral outrage at colonial oppression" (Khanna 2003: 178). She argues that this form of melancholy, "similar to that of the 'Westerners' losing a person or an idea, or expatriation, works slightly differently from the blueprint presented in the forms of psychoanalysis taken up by colonial psychiatry and psychology" (ibid.). Understanding literature in the appreciation of the psychoanalytic, and referring to Octave Mannoni, she asserts that "the literary is associated with the psychoanalytic "Other Scene", which allows insight into a real social problem through understanding the work of dreams, madness, and creative – particularly literary – production" (Khanna 2003: 157).

I propose a nuanced reading of a selection of Manto's works through this understanding of colonial melancholy as the emotional make up of his protagonists. In fact, some of his early works like "*Tamāśā*" (Spectacle) and "*Inqalāb Pasand*" (Revolutionary) are excellent stories to read colonial melancholy. Another significant story is "*Nayā Qānūn*". While scholars like Jalal and Dubrow have read Manto's Partition stories in the contexts of "colonial difference" (Jalal 27) and "particular violence of forms of colonial governmentality" (Dubrow 2019: 2), some of his stories of despairing men set in cosmopolitan Bombay require more attention. I read these under-studied stories, set in pre-Partition Bombay, as symptomatic of colonial melancholy for a deeper understanding of the emergent fictional character of the idle slacker, the useless no-do-gooder, also popularised in contemporary Bombay cinema as the figure of the displaced but honest vagrant/*āvārah*.[283] Before turning to the idle slackers, I wish to briefly analyse his early story, "*Inqalāb Pasand*", and address the question of the 'mad' man, often sharing close semblances with some of Manto's idle men, signalling, once again, the close link between idleness and melancholy, where madness takes up an expression of critique. The semblances are portrayed in their critical distance from bourgeois society, their solitude, and in their melancholic disposition; only for the madman, melancholy turns into pathological mania. "*Inqalāb Pasand*" recounts the narrator's friend Salim's admission to a mental asylum. A desire for revolutionary change in society drives Salim, who had repeatedly failed in his studies and earned the reputation of having an idle disposition (*āvārah mizāj*), being useless and incapable (*nālāʾiq*). The narrator claims Salim is knowledgeable and brilliant but never interested in his studies. His cheerful disposition changed overnight with his

283 K. A. Abbas's films *Awara/Āvārah* (1951), *Shri 420/Śrī 420* (1955).

father's sudden demise. According to the narrator, Salim cannot express his loss and grief in words, and this inability explains his emotional and mental torture:

> He who can express his feelings to someone else can successfully lighten the burden of his conscience. The one who feels but cannot understand his emotions and cannot express them to others is like the person trying his best to remove something stuck in his throat that keeps sliding down. This is a kind of mental torture that cannot be expressed in words. (Manto, from *Ātaś Pāre aur Syāh Hāśye* 1984: 25)

Unable to digest – in this case, even ingest – his loss, Salim has already been admitted to an asylum. Salim proclaims that he is a 'revolutionary'. In reflecting upon Salim's use of the word, the narrator explains that his friend desired a radical change in the social *status quo*. He terms what Salim undergoes as mental or emotional acerbity (*ẓahnī taʿaṣṣūb*) (Manto 1984: 33). The growing desire for change resulted in Salim often asserting suspicion regarding his own identity – "perhaps I am not Salim" (1984: 34). Unable to separate his consciousness from that of the lost and loved ideal of social change projected onto the father figure, Salim begins harassing people with questions regarding social problems and is declared 'mad' (another word for harassment is *āvārah kardan*). He expresses his absolute denouncement of the inequality of wealth in society, rejecting allegations of madness. In a final meeting, the narrator is stunned to hear Salim talk endlessly, compared to his previous inarticulation, before he is sent to the asylum. Salim's 'madness' manifests as an inability to assimilate the loss of his ideal and mourn it. The story reflects certain autobiographical references. Manto's father had suddenly died, leaving him with an unresolved grief; he had failed his college examinations; this was also during his contact with the PWA. Manto identified with his protagonist Salim (in a prophetic fashion, he too was sent to an asylum in later years), and it is telling that he does not consider the movement (or even such a network, i.e., the PWA) as a solution or even a factor in the tragedy of his revolution-loving protagonist. This is an early indication of the growing emotional and intellectual conflicts Manto would have with the ideals of nationalist progressive politics.

4.3.3 The Critical Idleness of Useless Men in Manto's Bombay Stories

The resistance, at times inability to do productive work, the vagrant idleness of the youth of his generation, and the unhappy, melancholic disposition of hundreds of thousands of urban men and women in Bombay drew Manto to a different, contrasting aesthetics from the one of progress. Reflective of the subcontinent's complex socio-political and colonial predicament, a recurrent motif

in Manto's Bombay stories is the figure of the unemployed, idle young man refusing to work. Their portrayals are particularly fascinating in his Bombay stories like "*Pīran*" (1950) and "*Bādśāhat kā Kẖātmah*" (End of Empire, 1950). A general refusal to regular work is also seen in stories like "*Mammad Bhāī*" (where Mammad Bhai is a gangster), whereas a remarkable critique of child labour and excessive work is poignantly woven into the story "*J̌ī Āyā Ṣāḥab*" (Coming, Sir). In "*Pīran*" and "*Bādśāḥat kā Kẖātmah*", the refusal to work is seen almost as a pathological affliction. Set in Bombay, both stories narrate the predicament of protagonists who refuse to work and are rather oddly romantically inclined towards certain women. In these two stories, I read this persistent rejection of productive employment as a critical variation of idleness, an expression to register their protest against the social order of nationalist progress and colonialism-driven capitalism. The melancholic disposition of the characters is seen to be on the verge of being 'cured' with the initiation of pseudo-romantic affiliations, a glimpse of the possibility of hope. However, Manto's short stories, depicting colonial and post-colonial India (and Pakistan), remain far from offering salvation to anyone.[284]

In the story "*Pīran*", like in many stories, Manto's narrator is Manto himself. This is a unique feature in Manto's stories; with the writer's association with the narrative voice, a personal and realistic tone is imparted. Many of his Bombay stories share this characteristic, suggesting that Manto saw himself as a character in these stories. The penury-stricken narrator living in a dingy, over-crowded Bombay *caul* [285] is visited by his friend Brij Mohan every Sunday. Brij Mohan borrows some money every Sunday, enough for a train ride. He would ride to Bandra to meet Piran[286], a Parsi girl. At Piran's house, they would engage in idle talk, and he would give her the answers for the *Illustrated Weekly*'s crossword puzzles. Manto, the narrator, writes of Piran that she was neither beautiful nor worthy of his friend's attention, although he never said so to Brij Mohan and always managed to give his friend the cash for the ride. Instead, the narrator reveals his thoughts to his readers: "He [Brij Mohan] was

284 In response to criticism against writing 'bad literature', Manto is quoted as saying, "How could I expose the bosom of society when it was already naked?" See Ayesha Jalal (2013), 169.

285 A *chaul* (*caul* in academic transliteration) is a housing situation most commonly found in Bombay. Accommodating a large number of people in one building where sometimes families live in one room and must share bathrooms, toilets, and communal spaces like balconies and courtyards (in case there is one) generally connotes penury, lack of privacy and a diminished existence.

286 Diacritics are used while writing titles of stories, and in the case of proper names if within quotations.

unemployed. All day he would wring his head to solve the crossword puzzle for Piran. He had even earned some small prizes, but Piran had taken them all" (from *Ṭhaṇḍā Gośt* 1989: 138). One Sunday, Mohan declares that he broke up with Piran since she brought terrible luck; whenever he spends time with her, he cannot find any employment! Piran argues that Brij Mohan is an idle slacker of the highest order. Mohan asks a film director for a job. Although he also believes Mohan to be a slacker, the director ends up employing him for two hundred and fifty rupees a month with a contract for the year. Mohan shows Manto an advance and expresses his desire to show off:

> I would really like to go to Bandra and show this cash and contract to Pīran. But I am afraid that Nanū Bhā'ī will fire me immediately. This has happened to me so many times – I get a job, I meet her, and then, for some reason or another, I am fired. God knows why this girl is such bad luck! I won't see her face for at least a year now. Anyway, I have very few clothes left. After I have some new clothes, we'll see what will be done. (Manto, from *Ṭhaṇḍā Gośt* 1989: 40)

Brij Mohan works regularly; he acquires everything that a bachelor needs to live a comfortable life when suddenly, one day, he receives a letter from Piran. The narrator suggests that he need not meet her, but Mohan argues slyly that it has been six months already, and he is tired of being employed. The next day, he meets Piran, and the day after, he loses his job; in fact, Nanu Bhai goes bankrupt and has to sell the studio. The narrator is stunned, and Brij Mohan calmly replies that it is inevitable. He lights a cigarette, picks up his camera and goes out for a stroll. The story is a mockery of progressive values of utilitarian time and opportunity, with Brij Mohan's fortunes tossed up repeatedly. Once again, he is a pauper, having spent everything he had earned. Once again, the narrator starts lending him money each Sunday. Eventually, the narrator, Manto, asks Mohan what attracts him to Piran. He answers that it is simply the bad luck she brings into his life. Mohan wishes to test this theory and plans to quit before he is fired. Manto pleads with him not to see Piran again, but to no avail. Mohan goes to see her with a drafted resignation letter. He waits in anticipation, hoping to control his own (un)employment. But on submitting the letter, his resignation is rejected, and he receives a raise! Mohan finally stops seeing Piran and loses all interest in her. Eventually, he confesses to Manto, "[a]s soon as she had ran out of bad luck, I got bored of her. I lost the most fascinating occupation I had. Now who will be responsible for keeping me idle?" (1989: 149)

Although the story seems implausible in the characterisation of Brij Mohan, irregular (un)employment was widespread. Thousands of men and women came to the metropolis to try their luck at some odd job. Unemployment, penury, difficulty in finding and maintaining jobs, and high living expen-

ses had made it commonplace for many men to have a dismissive attitude to the ups and downs of regular employment. Most people who travelled to the city arrived with the baggage of heavy losses. Social inequality, the glamour of the metropolis, and contemporary political mayhem deepened the sense of loss as portrayed in some of Manto's fascinating character sketches like Saugandhi in "*Hatak*", Mozelle in "*Mozelle*" and Naim in "*Bānjh*". A recurring refusal of employment, living at the mercy of friends and acquaintances, and finding shelter in the serpentine alleys of the city are depicted as common among young men in these stories. The poverty and precarity were effects of long-standing colonialism as well as sudden and rampant industrialisation and capitalism. In this social set-up, the reluctance towards and refusal of regular employment has to be read as a form of suppressed protest in the psychological portrayal of these men. They are portrayals of the millions who were not convinced of ideals and promises of progress, as practically, progress had taken the form of technological and capitalist advancements, not the socialist progress that the emergence of progressive ideals in the early twentieth century had evoked.

While in *Pīran*, the protagonist has an unusual desire to be unemployed and idle; alternately, in "*Bādśāḥat kā Kẖātmah*", the protagonist refuses to work because he refuses to 'serve' (*ġulāmī*) anyone. Service or *ġulāmī* is contrasted against authority/*bādśāhat*, and resistance to work is registering an affect of protest. A pronounced disillusionment towards economic advancements in the protagonists' lives is common in both stories. In *Pīran*, through the on-and-off employment of Brij Mohan, one arrives at his despair embodied in the loss of Piran's bad luck, which Brij Mohan held onto through periods of active idleness. Once her bad luck has worn out, his loss of interest in Piran reflects an impoverished ego with a critical agency, where actual loss is beyond his bounds of awareness and expression.

"*Bādśāḥat kā Kẖātmah*" is a more straightforward story but one with more complex psychological characterisation. The story is told in the third person narrative voice, directly introducing the reader to the protagonist, Manmohan. Manmohan is sitting in his friend's office; the friend is away for some time and offers the office for the protagonist to sleep in instead of the usual footpath. The telephone rings; a woman's voice on the line admits to dialling the wrong number and apologises. Manmohan returned to his book, although he has read it at least twenty times; it is the only book he has. The narrative voice can already be read as offering a biased focalization in sentences like "for a week, the office was under Manmohan's reign" (1985: 9). The narrator makes a case for Manmohan's refusal to work:

> He would lay around alone in the office. He abhorred employment. If he wanted to, he could easily get a job as a film director in any film company.

> However, he had no wish to serve anyone. He was incredibly reliable and relaxed, so his friends often agreed to handle his daily expenses. And what expenses, really? A cup of tea and toast in the mornings, two *capātīs* and a bit of gravy for lunch, a packet of cigarettes a day – that was all. (Manto, from *Bādśāḥat kā Khātmah*, 1985: 10)

Manmohan's only desire is to be loved by a woman. He proclaims to his friends that he will become a 'role model' employee if he finds true love. The clock strikes at noon, and the telephone rings again; it is the same voice. The woman confesses that she wants to speak to him; Manmohan is surprised and amused. He chats about his usual life on the streets and footpaths; when asked about his occupation, he casually responds that he idly strolls around (*āvārahgardī*) all day, and sleeps at night. He also explains that he has been living a lavish life in this office this last week. She finds his chatter to be absorbing. Manmohan, on the other hand, expresses no curiosity about her. She asks about his hobbies; he laughs at her, although he admits to his interest in photography. One day, she asks if he has eaten breakfast; he replies that he cannot since he has no money. In despair, she asks why he says such terrible things – is it because he is sad? Manmohan ponders for a while before responding: "Not really. If I had any sorrow in my life, I am now quite used to it."

Although Manmohan initially appears detached, in a few days, he begins to wait for her calls. He feels an unbearable restlessness if she does not ring according to the hour. They talked twice daily for a month, and Manmohan still does not have her name. Eventually, he receives a letter from his friend informing him that he will return in a week. Manmohan asks the woman to stop calling this number, and she suggests that on his last day in this office, when his kingly lavish life (*bādśāḥat*) will come to a close, she will give him her telephone number. They plan to meet finally, but he develops a fever the next day. It keeps getting worse with each passing hour; his physical condition deteriorates rapidly. Unquenchable thirst, breathlessness, and delirious sounds of ringing telephones take control of his senses. When the telephone rings, he musters enough strength to move towards it and manages to utter into the receiver: "my empire has come to its close" (1985: 26). He splutters blood and falls with his face down as the woman on the line asks him to note down her number.

Narrated mostly through dialogues, both the telephonic conversation between the characters and the interface of the protagonist's outer and inner emotional selves, the story is symptomatic of Manto's scriptwriting experiences. In fact, the narrative is woven with such attention to the visual-aural-oral and dramatic aspects that it attains a cinematic quality in style. Manmohan's indolent, introverted, and impossibly independent life and his affective engagement with urban colonial modernity embodied in the woman's elusive presence are the two contesting realities of contemporary India that Manto's

protagonists are often seen to be struggling with. His confused attachment and detachment from her are associated with his poverty and attempt at living an independent life. The mocking allusions to authority or 'kingship'/'*bādśāḥat*' is a rhetorical twist on the idea of self and sovereignty, the burning question, not only for the individual but also for the nation. While *bādśāh* translates to king, it also means 'emperor'; this is a nuanced use of the term where Manto implies sovereignty but pits it against the ideas of both spheres – imperialism as well as progressive capitalist modernity – unfit for the sovereignty of an independent individual, who resists *ġulāmī* or subservience. Allusions to technology, like the clock and the telephone, stand at odds with the character's emotional and internal unity; they cause disruptions in his melancholy and idle flow of life. Dialogue, idle talk, anecdotes, lies, and the constant looming but dimmed soundscape of the cut-throat and trickster city are some of the elements through which Manto's stories stylistically differed from the progressive-socialist stories of this time. In these rambling interfaces of narration, Manto's Bombay stories negotiate a space for the solitary individual as idle and adrift in the glitter of the metropolis.

The practices of strolling, drifting, and idling in these stories can often be read as affective manifestations of modern, urban, colonial melancholy. The other affective manifestation of colonial melancholy is violence, which many of Manto's famous characters embody. While the manifestation of melancholy as violence is read repeatedly through various angles, the manifestation of idleness in his stories is grossly understudied. This emotional aspect of his work forms an integral social and literary background to mid-twentieth century India's emerging issues. Vagrancy, homelessness, and unemployment had become rampant as the country attained political independence from a long-lasting foreign rule, leaving the nation bankrupt. These issues received significant attention in the films of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, starting with *Awara*/*Āvārā* (Vagrant/Idle) (1951). The PWM could more successfully connect to larger masses (which was its original agenda) through the performing arts – cinema and theatre.[287] Many of the progressive writers wrote for cinema – from composing lyrics to script and penning dialogue. Abbas, a progressive director, popularised the figure of the vagrant, idle, but honest young man, a man of integrity (reflecting the looted nation with its spirit intact), in what Priyamvada Gopal calls the 'Vagrant trilogy' (2005: 126).[288] *Awara* did not only resonate with the massive Indian audience but was also a great hit in countries

287 Mainly through its sister organisation, the Indian People's Theatre Association

288 The films *Awara*, *Dharti ke Laal* and *Shri 420* constitute Abbas's 'Vagrant Trilogy', according to Gopal.

like Turkey and Russia, signalling a particular ethos of resistance against capitalist drives (Gopal 2005: 128). In her study of Abbas's films, Gopal sees him bringing the figure of the vagrant to the limelight through the discourses of "subjectivity, agency and social transformation" (2005: 126), implied in national possibility. Like in Manto's stories, the vagrant in Abbas's films also signifies a national predicament. The difference between Abbas's and Manto's vagrants, though, is that Manto offers no resolution, thus enabling no particular "social transformation". His melancholic protagonists spend their narrated time in an internal conflict between subjectivity and agency (one being lost, the other being critical), unable to progress or transform in the "national possibility" that progressive literature aimed to bring about. In his short stories, Manto remained the lonely voice who recorded, captured, and echoed the suppressed, nuanced, and critical soundscape of the idle drift that the 'submerged population' of urban India experienced.

4.4 Qurratulʿain Hyder's Narration of Idyllic Pasts

Qurratulʿain Hyder was born to the elite household of Sajjad Hyder Yildrim and Nazr Sajjad Hyder (1892–1967). Yildrim, as mentioned before, was an early Urdu short story writer; he also translated Turkish literature into Urdu. Nazr Hyder was a significant name among early Urdu women writers, known for her novels and regular contributions to leading journals for women. Yildrim served in the colonial government and was posted in various parts of India, including Mussoorie, Dehradun, Aligarh, Ghazipur, Etawah, and the Andaman Islands. Qurratulʿain was born into this upper-class literary family and grew up in a cultured, liberal, and dynamic Muslim household. It was natural for her to take up writing; in her childhood, she reportedly wrote stories for dolls. Her first serious collection of stories was published in 1945 under the title *Sitāroṇ se Āge* (Beyond the stars), while some of her earlier writings were already published in various literary journals, including the esteemed *Ḥumāyūn*. Hyder was still pursuing her university education at Lucknow's Isabella Thoburn College when, at the age of twenty, in December of 1947, like millions of other Muslims, she fled with her family to the promised land of Pakistan. In 1947, while still in Lucknow, Hyder started to pen her first novel, *Mere bhī Ṣanamkhāne* (*My Temples, Too*); it explored the ramifications of the Partition on a group of young idealists and was published in Lahore in 1949. The impact of Partition was so remarkable on her psyche that she wrote her next novel, *Ṣafīnah-i Ġam-i Dil* (Ship of the heart's sorrows) on the same theme, almost in a continuation of her first novel. In the early 50s, she worked with Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and made documentary films; she also started

writing for magazines and newspapers. She then travelled to England, working as a journalist for a few years with the BBC; she also wrote for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Eastern World*. [289] In the late 1950s, Hyder began writing the novel *Āg kā Daryā* (*River of Fire*, 1959), which would become her legacy and bring back the novel as a serious genre in Urdu at a time when poetry and short fiction reigned under the pen of progressive writers.[290]

In 1961, she returned to India and settled in Bombay. She wrote for the *Imprint* and *Illustrated Weekly*, simultaneously returning to the genre of short fiction. She received the 1967 Sahitya Akademi Award in Urdu for a collection of these short stories, *Patjhaṛ kī Āvāz* (*The Sound of Falling Leaves*). In 1989, she received the Jnanpith Award, and in 2005, the Padma Bhushan. Hyder's illustrious literary career reflects her profound interest in time, memory, and history.[291] These short stories, written in the 60s, form a separate assortment in her literary career; they signal a return not only to a genre but also to a time gone by. I read these stories, written in the aftermath of the Partition, as negotiating the profound emotion of loss through a postcolonial, post-Partition variation of nostalgia. Later writers of the subcontinent take up this variation of nostalgia to explore different layers of the past and the conflicting feelings towards these perceptions of the past, in entangled emotions of love, loss, grief, and guilt.

4.4.1 The Past as a Source of Fiction: Weaving History with Memory

Although nostalgia has been read as a significant emotional expression in Urdu literature in the late-nineteenth century owing to the loss of civilisational pride, the 'nostalgic' underwent various manifestations through the decades of the twentieth century. While some late nineteenth-century writers struggled with an ambivalent nostalgia, as seen in Chapter 2, the literature produced in the aftermath of the Partition revoked a renewed nostalgia, now not only based on loss of civilisational pride but also expressing the loss of linguistic significance of Urdu, an idealised notion of communal syncretism prevalent in the

289 "Interview with Qurratulain Hyder by BBC Urdu". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmqdCOLHh3w&t=784s accessed on 13th May 2019. See also Jameel Akhtar's translated interview of Hyder, *A Singular Voice* (2017).

290 The progressive movement in Urdu produced impressive volumes of short stories and poetry, turning these genres into literary trends. The novel receded into the background until Hyder took it up again.

291 See also G. C. Narang's essay "Qurratulain Hyder: An Author Par Excellence" in Rakhshanda Jalil ed. *Qurratulain Hyder and the River of Fire* (2011), 47.

past, and for many whose families migrated, the loss of the idea of 'homeland'. This multidimensional loss drew various emotional responses from Urdu writers, particularly those who migrated to Pakistan. Manto's writing turned towards a more profound critical melancholy in his renowned Partition stories like "*Tobah Ṭek Singh*". Writers of the PWM who moved to Pakistan, although disillusioned[292], continued to aim for a progressive Islamic socialism that grew difficult to sustain following the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case of 1951–55.[293] Writers like Hyder and Intizar Husain turned towards an alternate notion of temporality, located in the communal harmony of the remembered past, referred to as the *gangā-jamnī tahẓīb* (the syncretic culture of Ganga and Jamuna, the two rivers representing the Indic and Islamicate aspects of India's civilisation). These formulations of alternative temporality accommodated the multiple losses in an affective response to re-live the past. Hyder is regarded as the pioneer of the modern Urdu novel, looking back at such syncretism that claims to be a predominant narrative of the subcontinent's history. *Āg kā Daryā* inspired several Urdu writers to express loss and grief, for example, *Udās Nasleṇ* (*The Weary Generations*, 1963) by Abdullah Hussein, and to some extent, *Bastī* (1979) by Intizar Husain. Hyder's magnum opus narrates an incredibly stretched fictional history in a complex understanding of the subcontinent's multiple pasts, its cultural and linguistic heterogeneity and discrepancies, disruption and violation unleashed by colonial rule, leading to the tragic partition, of not only the landmass stretching from Afghanistan to Burma, but of the South Asian civilisation as an integral phenomenon.

On the other hand, her short stories initiate a trend of writing after the Partition, which attempts to access the past through reminiscences and nostalgia for 'simpler' times, manifest in the joys and idle curiosities of a childhood spent under the glory of imperial administration of the British Raj. Hyder responds to the loss of Partition with a nuanced crafting of pre-Partition nostalgia that over-

292 For example, Faiz's poem of despair in the aftermath of Independence, "*Ṣubḥ-i Āzādī*". English translations include "The Dawn of Freedom" by Mustansir Dalvi and "Freedom's Dawn" by V. G. Kiernan.

293 The alleged Conspiracy to overthrow the government of Liaquat Ali Khan, the first president of Pakistan, was used as a false charge (unresolved) under which the two stalwarts of PWM, Zaheer and Faiz, were incarcerated. Many literary scholars like Coppola and Jalil see this as 'the last nail in the coffin of progressivism in Pakistan'. See Jalil's chapter "The Decline of the Progressive Writers" (2014), 339–401; Coppola's chapter "The Progressive Writers' Association in India and Pakistan, 1947–1970: Years of Decline" (2017). Other scholars like K. A. Ali see the ideals of the PWM and communism as having played a more prolonged and significant role in shaping Pakistan's early years (2011).

laps with postcolonial nostalgia. She presents the past in the image of a wholesome childhood, in a heterogenous subcontinental cultural setting, rendering the past as complex, beyond polarities of national and communal politics, thereby resisting the binary of the collaborator and the resistor in the narrative figure of the child. The collaborator and the resistor become ambiguous, often indistinct categories in the context of what Denis Walder (2011) terms 'postcolonial nostalgias'. Walter understands this variant of nostalgia as a nuanced, "complex form of representation for writers concerned to express their relationship with the recalled or remembered pasts they identify with; in particular those whose pasts have been shaped by empire and/or colonisation" (2011: 3). Postcolonial nostalgias are ambivalent in nature, particularly given the memory of trauma, genocide, and violence as legacies of colonisation. This ambivalence in Hyder's narratives is manoeuvred through the child narrator.

Qurratulʿain Hyder foregrounds genre ambiguities in these proclaimed stories, particularly in childhood stories, reminiscing an idyllic past. This ambiguity is heightened through her references to her childhood memories, uncannily similar to the stories she wrote. This overlap of story and memory is partly reflected in the blatant, persistent class privilege of the characters in her stories, but also, and perhaps more so, in the stylistic innovation of her writing, especially in later works like her part-family chronicle-part autobiography, *Kār-i Jahān Darāz Hai* (The affairs of the world go on, 1977). Hyder reportedly labels the book as a "biographical non-fictional novel", while she calls another later novel, *Gardiś-i Rang-i Caman* (Changing hues of the garden, 1988), a "semi-documentary novel" (Asaduddin 2000: 30–31). Such allusions to her literary works as blurring the lines between fiction and reality, woven with autobiography, memory, and history, add to these ambiguities. This is also reflected in her short stories written after the Partition; for instance, the story originally titled "*Ḍālanvālā*" (1990 a) in Urdu is later translated into English by Hyder herself as "Memories of an Indian Childhood" (1994 a). Asaduddin writes of her stories that "they tend to be impressionistic pieces of expansive and dispersed reflection" rather than "possessing tautness and brevity which are thought to be the traditional hallmarks of a good story" (2000: 32). While his criticism is sound, this style of impressionistic, reflective prose is to be read as signalling a way of negotiating the ambivalences of postcolonial nostalgia, a recurrent theme in her short stories. A significant factor regarding this style in her stories is the child narrator's voice embedded in loose, reflective prose, merging narrative styles of diary-writing, memoir, anecdotes, community and family gossip, and recounting overheard conversations, among other oral interactions. These sources of fiction are aptly suited to the personal, fragmentary, and unreliable voice of childhood and adolescence rather than a tightly woven plot.

While the past is her archive for fiction, Hyder is widely known to be elusive about the specificity of past incidents, rendering the past in the lens of memory rather than 'history'.[294] In his book, A Singular Voice, featuring various interviews with the author, Jameel Akhtar (2017: Intr.) mentions her dismissive attitude to the present and her profound hold on memory. Raza Rumi claims that Hyder is, in fact, a writer of 'social history'; this perception of history is seen to emerge from below, from the voices of common people (2011: 53–54). In his essay on Hyder's relationship with the past as portrayed in her novel, *Gardiś-i Rang-i Caman*, Khalid Ashraf criticises Hyder for her nostalgia or "*māẓī parastī*" (literally, worshipping the past) (2017: 233). Nostalgia, recurrent returns to the past, and mourning the loss of a culture of syncretism are aspects that loom large over Hyder's writings. Her obsession with the past is perhaps best expressed by one of her protagonists in *River of Fire*, Talat, signalling this specific turn to temporalities, i.e., the relationship between the past, the present and the future:

> "But the past is present and the present is the past, and also the future," Talat replied. "See, this is also the Qoranic concept of Time, an Egyptian scholar at the Islamic Centre once told me. He asked me to read Mohyeddin Ibn-el-Arabi, the Spanish metaphysician. But how much can one know? Time is a juggler, it goes on persecuting me". (Hyder 1998: 355–56)

Although several essays and articles discuss Hyder's obsession with the past, they are mostly intended to unravel the complex temporality of her novel *Āg kā Daryā*. In this chapter, I read nostalgia as an emotion in her stories and propose that by probing into memory and history, even in weaving them together, Hyder attempts to introduce a way of dealing with loss in the aftermath of Partition in her short stories written in the 1960s. The nostalgia she portrays goes beyond the yearning or longing associated with the pathological understanding of the phenomenon – for longing in this context brings its political implications, especially in memories of a past under colonial rule. My reading proposes that in addressing this tricky aspect of longing or yearning, through the voice of the child narrator, Hyder not only initiates a renewed way of dealing with loss and negotiating these ambivalent aspects of postcolonial nostalgia but also pre-empts a dialogue with Indian English writing in the years to come.

While nationalist histories of both countries, after Partition, attempted to view the two nations as self-contained sovereign entities, exclusive of each other, writers like Hyder resisted these nationalist narratives and, consequently, the exclusive nationalist identities. They repeatedly pointed to the ruptures in

294 For example, see Jameel Akhtar's Introduction.

the subcontinent's nations without the syncretic culture that flourished in the past. While she is bluntly critical of the British for bringing about such differences among the communities, she also considers British India a significant aspect of India's cultural heritage. What is most significant about her elite characters is that they refuse to be categorised into boxes despite their disparate socio-cultural backgrounds. Years later, Hyder is reported to have said that she had travelled to many parts of the world to know people, and that as she had expected, people are the same everywhere (see Hyder's BBC interview). For such universalisations, Hyder drew much criticism from prominent writers of the time, most of them stalwarts of the progressive association and staunch believers in the reality of class difference. Rajinder Singh Bedi, for instance, criticised her first novel for its descriptions of elite parties and social gatherings, while Ismat Chughtai wrote a long rant against Hyder's class (un)consciousness in an (in)famous essay, titled "*Pompom Ḍārling*" (c. 1952)[295]. Chughtai, one of the progressive pioneers exploring female sexuality and familial violence, apart from other socially relevant literary themes, mockingly asks Hyder, for how long would she "continue to be obsessed with Shosho and Fofo and Bharatnatyam and take dips in the swimming pool of the Savoy de la Mer?": "Why don't you come out and see what lies in the outside world?" (Chughtai 2000 [1952]: 116). Chughtai clarifies her position as belonging to a group of writers writing for "readers, not for their own enjoyment" (2000: 117). She further accuses Hyder of "fiddling around with the dazzling atmosphere of pleasure resorts and circuses" (Chughtai 2000: 123).[296]

Chughtai's critique of Hyder is based on her characters and their cultural milieu – people of a specific class who, according to Chughtai, do not have to face the social realities of the present. This is not entirely true of Hyder's characters; they belong to various classes, cultures, and backgrounds, and have considerably tricky journeys in their narrated lives. Jameel Akhtar compares her characters with the stock characters in mainstream Urdu fiction of the time: "In Ainee Apa's[297] stories, everything was different. She wrote of the upper-middle class, her characters were usually highly educated, English-speaking, globetrotting" (Akhtar 2017: xiv). He claims that Hyder's stories glorified "traditions of

295 The original date of publication is not traceable, but the essay was published in a collection titled *Chūʾī Mūʾī* (1952. If "*Pompom Ḍārling*" was published before, it couldn't have been too long before 1952, as it was precisely around this time that Hyder was introduced to the Urdu sphere.

296 For the Urdu original essay, see Chughtai (1952), 148.

297 Hyder was affectionately addressed as ʿAinī āpā by many writers, critics, and friends.

feudal culture and civilization", writing about those who were born "with a silver spoon in their mouths": "They were oblivious to their surroundings, free of cares and worries, lost in their own glittering world" (Akhtar 2017: xv). Hyder admonishes such categorisations of her characters and themes. She clarifies in the English Introduction to her collection of short stories, *The Sound of Falling Leaves*, 1994 (originally, *Patjhaṛ kī Āvāz*, 1965) the "sociological hinterland" (Hyder 1994) of her work, connecting her own life to her characters, once again weaving fiction with memory and autobiographical references. She describes her parents' literary and cultural activities, social circles, dinner parties, and the nationalist-reformist movements (the Aligarh Movement) that drove them. For instance, following a paragraph in which she mentions the accolades her mother received, she shares with the reader, somewhat abruptly, that "[t]he era of dainty afternoon teas in glazed verandahs and Chekhovian women strolling down rose-lit avenues came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of the Second World War" (Hyder 1994: x). She returns to her memories again:

> In the "bioscope" of memories, the tropical-colonial milieu becomes more vivid as we return to India and live in Ghazipur. The atmosphere was pure East India Company. On Sunday mornings Mother took her driving lessons around the magnificent tomb of Lord Cornwallis. In the afternoons the resident Ustad taught her to play the sitar and harmonium. He also entertained our dinner guests with his superb music. […] From Ghazipur to Dehra Dun – this other England, demi-paradise of retired Englishmen. (Hyder 1994: xi–xii)

When Frank O'Connor describes his 'submerged population' in relation to the subject of short stories, he uses examples of people pigeon-holed into categories, trying to break free – "Gogol's officials, Turgenev's serfs, Maupassant's prostitutes, Chekhov's doctors and teachers, Sherwood Anderson's provincials, always dreaming of escape" (1963: 18). He clarifies that although it may be a characteristic of the group, the group is not merely defined by "material squalor", but rather, a sense of "defeat", "inflicted by a society that has no signposts, a society that offers no goals and no answers" (O'Connor 1963: 18). In a nuanced reading, Hyder's subjects can also be seen to form a submerged population who embody upper-class lifestyle and carefree ways but are defined by the restrictions of their socio-cultural predicament that offer no goals and no answers despite their worldly means. They are seen to represent a way of life that is in the process of being lost, negotiating a way of life that has to emerge. Simultaneously, their loss and their predicaments were subjects of ridicule at the time amongst Urdu literary circles. Hyder emerged as a "controversial" voice, drawing flak from the progressives for "glorifying the bourgeoisie". She claims: "It was hard to explain that mine was a tongue-in-cheek "Studies in a

Dying Culture", that all those who belonged to these classes were not ogres" (Hyder 1994: xiv). The idea of this dying culture is not merely a recurring theme in her works but the backdrop, the "social hinterland" of her fiction. The characters make repetitive, often futile journeys of 'escape'. It is also imperative to note that through the characters and the cultural milieu of Hyder's fiction, she brought to Urdu literature the concerns and predicaments of a class of people that modern Urdu fiction did not accommodate before – particularly women of upper classes, educated in the colonial English system, modern and global (or western) in their outlook but South Asian in their cultural setup. Writers like Nayantara Sehgal, writing in English, addressed similar themes in novels like *A Time to be Happy* (1958). This emerging class was a cultural reality that had become the subject of Indian English writing; Hyder was one of the first writers to address this milieu in Urdu.

Urdu, as a language in India, began to embody an aspect of cultural and civilisational loss (once again) in the aftermath of the Partition. Qurratulʿain Hyder grieved the loss of this linguistic richness, wrote, and talked about it repeatedly: "A language isn't just about words and printing them. Along with being published, it's also important for it to be used in everyday life" (Akhtar 2017: 65). Hyder foresaw the inevitable decline of Urdu in India, which would explain her decision to 'transcreate' her fiction into English in her later years. Hyder's novels and stories are taught in Indian Writing in English courses in universities, alongside the works of English writers from India, mainly because her texts are re-written in English. By rendering her published Urdu works in English, she attempts to bridge the gap that had started to widen between English and vernaculars, particularly Urdu literary output in India. Simultaneously, by allowing access to her own writings for English readers in India, Hyder broadened the spectrum of literature on what she terms a 'dying culture'. Unsurprisingly, the theme of her works after Partition is loss; many of her later short stories are invested not so much in the emotion of yearning and longing for what has been lost but rather in preserving the memories of their occurrence. I read a selection of these nostalgic stories as an attempt on her part to allow readers to revisit a time of "one's childhood which seems safe, intact and rosy" as a rest or repose from the precarity of the present (Hyder 1994: Pref.).

When these stories were written, Hyder's turn towards nostalgia was instrumental in making it possible for Urdu readers to reimagine and experience a temporality before rupture, before nationalistic narratives and progressive propaganda had taken over the public sphere. In these nostalgic narratives, childhood and youth emerge as the alternate temporality, fashioned against the 'coming of age' narrative of the new nation(s). The events of Partition or Independence are understated, if at all mentioned, echoing her telling description of

two words that formed a chapter in *Āg kā Daryā*: "*Hindustān, 1947*" (Ḥaidar 1989: 385). The sense of leisurely timelessness in these stories of childhood is an attempt at preserving time, as the narrator comments in "The Magic Mountain":

> Becket House is still there but the people who see it today would find nothing extraordinary about it. It is the usual sort of bungalow in the mountains. But you must believe me when I tell you that, in this colourless world of ours, there was once a time when a fairy from the Caucasus Mountains used to visit that house in Almora by the light of the fireflies. […] And you must also know that childhood vanishes like the light of the fireflies, as though we had never been young and innocent once. But those children are perhaps still there, laughing inside that vine-covered bungalow. Because Time is a Tablet Preserved – on which time can have no effect. (Hyder 1994c: 238)

Time, however, is only felt to be preserved in the reconstruction of the past. The narratives of one's childhood are not yearned or longed for in these stories but suggest a re-living and remembering. Memory is used in the garb of fiction to signify the act of remembering. In an intricate reconstruction of the leisurely past, the nostalgic flavour flourishes with the appeal of sensory experiences and the innocence of a child's feelings, albeit recollected in seemingly simplistic short stories.

4.4.2 Childhood, Leisureliness, and Post-Partition Nostalgia in Hyder's Stories

The ambivalent nostalgia of the late nineteenth-century Urdu literary output was followed by the emergence of 'progress' (and utilitarianism) – *taraqqī* – as an emotion concept. It was resoundingly felt to be a suitable response to the loss of not only civilisational pride in the aftermath of 1857 but also the loss of an entire way of life. *Taraqqī* emerged as a rejuvenating concept, which provided hope to Urdu-speaking communities in pre-Partitioned South Asia. It played a significant role in the national struggle for independence from foreign rule and forging ties and solidarities with a pan-Asian, and Afro-Asian community of Muslim writers and thinkers.[298] A decade after 1947, the decline of pro-

298 Prominent Urdu progressive writers like Faiz Ahmad, Sajjad Zaheer, and Akhtar Raipuri were closely associated with Asian and African writers' group. Living in Beirut for some time, Faiz was famously one of the significant voices and editors of the Afro-Asian literary platform, *the Lotus* magazine (1968–91). For a condensed understanding of the Progressives' international links and solidarities, see Aijaz Ahmad, "The Progressive Movement" (2011).

gress and the disillusionment of Independence in the aftermath of the Partition provided a suitable atmosphere for nostalgia to resurface. In an attempt to unpack Partition as a literary trend in Urdu, Asif Farrukhi writes of three stages in Partition narratives, namely, "Partition as a story", "Partition as the frame of stories", and "Beyond the Partition" (2011: 104). In this third stage, he reads the works of Qurratulʿain Hyder and Intizar Husain as transcending the category by "taking it beyond Partition to a broader view of history, of which Partition is only a component" (ibid.). While Farrukhi uses Hyder's *Āg kā Daryā* and Husain's *Bastī* to elaborate his case, he leaves a hint regarding Hyder's stories, claiming that they cannot be regarded as "Partition literature". Their 'beyond'-ness is also temporally formulated through a nostalgia for pre-Partition India. They are retrospective narratives, looking back, beyond the rupture of Partition, to a childhood unscathed by sectarian violence and a time of innocence and leisureliness. Experiences of leisure and idleness are also reiterated in their recollection and retelling. The portrayal of childhood as a recurring theme that goes hand-in-hand with nostalgia in contemporary English novels from India is also observed by Monika Fludernik (2020: 24).

Childhood and its allusion to innocence have often been featured as a stage of 'purity' in contexts of colonised nations. For colonisers, this childhood of the baser/lower, alternately barbaric, and infantile nations is formulated as immature, waiting, not yet modern or incapable of self-rule – an allegedly valid reason for 'benevolent despotism'. Likewise, for a post-colonial nation, the infantilising attitude of the erstwhile coloniser draws on narratives of coming of age, maturity, and, literally, independence.[299] In the nostalgic narratives of childhood read in this chapter, a setting replete with colonial reminiscences of sprawling English-style bungalows and a fascinating array of characters and afternoon teas, Hyder brings a nuance to the emotion of nostalgia beyond the binaries of the meaning of childhood as portrayed by the coloniser and the colonised, and beyond yearning or longing. In her stories, I read this post-Partition nostalgia as an offshoot of Walder's reading of 'postcolonial nostalgias' (2011). In his identification of the plural 'we' for whom postcolonial nostalgia matters, Walder reiterates the significance of often overlapping communities of the coloniser and the colonised, the resister and the collaborator from the works of Ashish Nandy and Homi Bhabha. Replete with such ambiguities, postcolonial nostalgias can only be addressed with a continuing awareness of one's position, context, and role in the retelling of the past (Walder 2011: 13–14). He advocates "due caution", "critical sensitivity", and nuance in this understanding.

299 Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1981) is a well-known example that questions this narrative.

I read post-Partition nostalgia in the context of the subcontinent as that ambiguous representation of the past before 1947 in the work of writers who acknowledge that fuzzy identity – the overlap between 'collaborators' and 'resisters'.

Several Urdu writers migrated to Pakistan, anticipating a new homeland, a second chance. Many writers expressed disillusionment towards the two-nation theory in the aftermath of the Partition. Manto moved towards depression and mania, while a writer like Intizar Husain stayed back, claiming that "being a stranger (*ajnabīyat*, or the feeling of estrangement) in this new country helped him write".[300] Hyder did not stay; she left Pakistan and returned to India after several years in England. She refrains from directly discussing Partition after her first two novels, almost in a refusal to verbalise its haunting memory. Writing these stories of a leisurely childhood spent in a culturally heterogeneous India before the rupture is a way of coming to terms with the present. Although the Partition is erased or underplayed as an event in these stories, its absence and, at times, mere mention of its occurrence looms over these stories. I read this treatment of nostalgia for a time 'preserved' as also a way of protecting the memory of leisureliness, of her own childhood, projected as that of the unified subcontinent's youth. This treatment of nostalgia is cautious about longing for the remembered past. Svetlana Boym sees nostalgia as cognitive, manifested in two kinds of longing – the 'restorative' kind and the 'reflective' kind, the first focusing on *nostos* or the past and its possible restoration and reconstruction, whereas the second "dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss" (2001: 41). Hyder's nostalgia is projected as neither. It does not desire to restore, nor does it long for what is lost; it only functions to narrate and preserve the past in an affective telling of history and expresses an emotional affinity with that which is remembered.

I propose that this emotional affinity is a function of post-Partition nostalgia that renders it impossible to yearn for the past, as the past is complex with memories of happiness as well as trauma, guilt, and regret. In these stories, Hyder addresses this dilemma and allows readers to experience otium through these remembrances of childhood that can be claimed to be her own (autobiographical, by her admission) and representative of pre-independent British India (culturally). Reading these stories becomes a leisurely experience of the present while returning to a leisurely past in its narration. I read a selection of three stories, all written in the 1960s. Two of these stories, "*Ḍālanvālā*" and "*Yād kī ek Dhanak Ɉale*", were published in the Urdu collection *Patjharṛ kī Āvāz*

300 From a personal interview with Zahid Dar, a close friend of Husain's. Lahore, 2018.

(1965), while the third one, "*J̌ugnū'oṉ kī Dunyā*" was published later (c. 1990) in a collection under the same title. However, in her rendition of these stories in English, Hyder includes "*J̌ugnū'oṉ kī Dunyā*", which she translates or transcreates (a process Hyder claims with regards to her own translations) as "The Magic Mountain" in the English collection, titled *The Sound of Falling Leaves* (1994), along with the other two stories mentioned above. "*Ḍālanvālā*" (1990 a) is re-titled as "Memories of an Indian Childhood" (1994 a); "*Yād kī ek Dhanak J̌ale*" (1990 b) (A rainbow of memories) is transcreated under the title "My Aunt Gracie" (1994 b).

"*Ḍālanvālā*", the story, describes a place and memories of the place. Defying a plot, it is a rather scattered string of memories, connected through loose threads, unified because it all happened in one winter in Dalanvala and is recounted by a singular narrative voice. There are explicit assertions of the difference between the past and the present, and the singular narrative voice splits into two – the present adult recollects the story in the narrative voice of the intradiegetic child narrator. The narrator begins with describing the arrival of an "emaciated old man" to their bungalow. Mr Simon is a music teacher who has come to instruct the child narrator's cousin, Rehana, on how to play the sitar. Simon had a habit of looking for Resham (meaning silk), the cat since an odd friendship had ensued between the two. Each retelling of events is entangled with a range of diverse characters; the narrator repeatedly deviates from the main narrative with the events in the characters' lives. There is no central narrative; the several stories of various characters as connected to each other constitute the narrative, the story's structure reflecting its theme, the way communities were connected in this childhood paradise of the past. Like a community or neighbourhood, often called a "society" where different families cohabit, the story is peppered with stereotypical and recognisable characters, especially for a South Asian readership. There are cousins (Rehana Baji), cultured and haughty neighbours (Mrs Chatterjee and her *Rabindrasangīt* practising daughters), companions and maids (Ghafur Begum), lonely older men (Mr Simon), and servants (Faquira the houseboy, and Jaldhara, his sister-in-law). The scattering of Anglo-Indian characters aids the re-creation of a colonial hill town – Mr Becket (also called Pilipili Sahab by the naughty children), Diana Rose Becket, his daughter, and Peter Robert Fazal Masih, the '*pherīvālā*', who "grandly called himself a travelling salesman who traded in cloth and gossip". Several characters loom in the background of the narrative – the narrator's friends, her mother, and her circle of acquaintances. This range of characters inhabiting an idyllic, elite, domestic setting renders the narrative with a quotidian and familiar flavour.

The child narrator paints a lively picture of a small, tranquil hill town inhabited and influenced by English officials and families while harmoniously

accommodating characters from various Indian backgrounds, representing North Indian hill towns' multicultural heritage and heterogeneous population. Each of these historic cities, like Dehra Dun, Shimla, and Lansdowne, reflect an amalgamation of heavy English influences in their architecture, afternoon teas, and attire; this late colonial setting is juxtaposed with the apparently mysterious beliefs and lifestyles of the locals, the 'native' inhabitants of the hills. Finally, there are the travelling people of the subcontinent, who come to the hills for either work or leisure; they often find themselves bridging the two cultures, and to some extent, they are also consumers of both cultures. This third group also often embodies the narrative voice in stories set in the hills, observing the calm, serene, and slow-paced life. Hyder enriches the quotidian range of characters in Urdu fiction of her time by introducing the oft-ignored Anglo-Indian, the forgotten maids and companions, and the strangers and performers travelling through the town. After a few introductory paragraphs, she combines some of these threads and foretells the narrative gist for her readers: "A lot of things happened that winter. Resham broke her leg, Miss Zohra Derby, the Daredevil, arrived in town. Diana Becket was declared the Ravishing Beauty of London. Dr (Miss) Zubeida Siddiqui saw a black bog the size of a donkey at two in the morning. And Faquira's sister-in-law became a sparrow" (1994a: 3). While each of these incidents is singled out and explored as a microcosm, the focus given to them does not work to string them together. They also do not follow any sequential order.

The narrative is infused with a leisurely mood that is not interrupted by complications and developments, as the setting of an idyllic small town continues to pace out the narrative, and the minimum plot developments do not result in any emphatic transformations. The description of the setting invokes this atmosphere of leisureliness, juxtaposed with a colonial element of the retired and restful pace of life, away from the imperial hubs and metropolises like Delhi, Bombay, or Calcutta:

> Dalanwala was mostly inhabited by well-to-do retired Englishmen who lived quietly in their secluded, exquisitely furnished bungalows. Inside the peaceful houses, walnut tables displayed piles of *Illustrated London News*, *Tatler*, *Country*, *Life* and *Punch*. Bundles of *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* arrived by sea mail. In the mornings the ladies sat in their "morning rooms", writing home. In the afternoons, they had their high tea in the verandahs. The mantelpieces were crowded with silverframed portraits of sons who were engaged in further brightening up the Empire's sun over such places as Kenya, Ceylon, Malaya and so forth. (Hyder 1994a: 7)

On the other hand, the leisurely days of the narrator's childhood in the vicinity of her own community (beyond the binaries of Hindu-Muslim) are portrayed

through activities and movements that have no significant consequence or purpose from a child's perspective. The child narrator is employed as a strategic tool through whose eyes we notice minute details about characters, like Jaldhara's golden nose ring and her necklace. Secrets are revealed during gossip and small talk – like overhearing that Diana Becket had joined the travelling circus due to acute poverty, the narrator interrupts, saying, "But the Tommies gave her money, didn't they" (1994a: 9). The adult narrator's observations often overshadow the child narrator's loose talk: "[I]n this comfortably smug and very English locality (Indians were accepted as "upper class" and civilized enough to live in bungalows), Mr George Becket of the "pale blue eyes was the only Anglo-Indian" (1994a: 7). A direct influence of the early Urdu character sketch or *kẖāka-nigārī* is discernible in the drawing of these characters.

The narrative advances with the arrival of the 'Great East India Circus and the Carnival Company Ltd.' Small-town gossip plays an important role in the story, and Fazal Masih, the peddler of garments and gossip brings news that Diana Becket has joined the circus. Taking advantage of her Anglo-Indian lineage, the posters declared her the "sensational European Belle, the Ravishing Beauty of London" (1994a: 10). The idleness of the narrator is reflected in her role as the one who observes society with childlike curiosity and an ear for rumours and chatter. In an incident where Ghafur Begum is chatting with the severely ill and resting Jaldhara, the former asks the latter her secret to captivating young men. Suddenly, they notice the narrator's presence, and Ghafur Begum reprimands her, telling her to "run along and play" (1994a: 11). She then visits her friends, Kamala and Vimala, and hears more gossip. The circus finally leaves the hill-town, and people begin to recover from the excitement.

Meanwhile, the narrator's family prepares to host a new guest for the winter, a family acquaintance, Dr Zubeida Siddiqui, and the narrative centres around her piety, her education, her life in England, and her prospective match. Jaldhara's illness turns severe, resulting in her death. Faquira reportedly collects her ashes in an earthen pot and having found footprints of a sparrow on the pot the following day, he begins to believe that Jaldhara has turned into a sparrow. The jilted Miss Zubeida Siddiqui leaves for Calcutta and marries a Hindu. Life goes on in this hill-town where nothing really happens, and another winter arrives:

> It was an exceptionally severe winter. […] Carol singers went around the quiet roads of Dalanwala, singing "Silent Night" and "O Come Let Us Adore Him". As the night deepened the haunting notes of some lone Garhwali's flute were heard in the distance. The water in the "sparrow-cups" was frozen. Early in the morning ragged hillmen went about hawking coal. As the mist lifted the snow-covered Himalayas were lit-up by a weak sun. All day long blazing log rivers roared in the grates. (Hyder 1994a: 16)

The narrative ends with the news of the death of Mr Simon, caused by the freezing cold. Resham, who had an accident at the beginning of the story, finally recovers and waits for the old man at the gate. The narrator ends with two significant lines: "All this happened during that winter in Dehra Dun. After which I grew up" (Hyder 1994a: 17). This growing up gradually progresses to the growing out of a leisurely life and a syncretic, peaceful perception of the subcontinent. The story is a story, retold for recollection and reminiscing. The adult narrator does not express, even once, a desire for the past. This resistance to longing is highlighted in the curt full stop after the last words, "I grew up". The innocence of childhood is used as a tool to highlight the 'good old days' of leisurely, harmonious existence. A conflict is portrayed in Hyder's representation of a variegated, multicultural, heterogenous representation of India in her characters under a narrative titled "Memories of an Indian Childhood". However, she is careful to deftly weave in possible narratives of other Indian childhoods within her own memories. With such loose, impressionistic narratives of carefree, leisurely, and content pasts, a new shade of nostalgia is introduced in modern Urdu literature, in Hyder's words, to feel "safe" in the memory of days that seem "intact and rosy from this distance" (1994: Intr.).

This shade of nostalgia is repeated in the story "*J̌ugnū'oṉ kī Dunyā*", set in another hill-town, Almora. Not as creative as "*Ḍālanvālā*" in its characterisation, this is a relatively short, simplistic impression of what the child narrator remembers during her stay with her cousins in Almora. The language is charming and unhindered, critical of "silly" adult things; the world is painted as a place full of "fun". Similar to Dalanvala, the description of Almora from the perspective of a captivated child sets the tone of the story. The narrator's cousins live in a grand old English bungalow, Becket House, built by an English colonel. The house inhabitants who feature in the story are Achho and Parey, the narrator's cousins in the same age group; Azra Apa, the eldest of the siblings, studying for her matriculation; Humaira and Zehra, in eighth and seventh standards, respectively; Achhey, who gets admission in a school; and Imtiaz Hyder, visiting from Calcutta. The story is replete with interactions and exchanges between the children and their imagined worlds, typical of a middle/upper-class subcontinental childhood spent in the company of cousins and family acquaintances, especially during school holidays. A later, celebrated example of this part solitary-part interactive childhood and idleness is portrayed in Amit Chaudhuri's English novel, *The Strange and Sublime Address* (1991). "*J̌ugnū'oṉ kī Dunyā*" (1990c/1994c) achieves the effect in a condensed recounting of the unified temporal setting of a holiday. A story without a plot, it has a paced-out, leisurely mood, highlighted in the remembrance of youthful curiosities:

> From the verandah one could see the winding blue-grey road in the distance, with buses and cars crawling along like little toys and disappearing one after another into the mountains. Beneath the portico were massive drainpipes spanning a gorge. We aimed stones at the pipes – when they hit their mark, sparks flew. It was fun. The world was full of such strange, fascinating things. When Azra Apa combed her long hair, there were crackling sounds and sparks. (Hyder 1994c: 229)

Incidents follow one another in a style of abandonment – the narrator's rival and friend Accho recounts her accidental fall down the slope of a hill, her advanced lessons are compared to the narrator's, the search for "fairy rings", the narrator's terrified waiting for the ghost of Colonel Becket to appear and ask for butter and sugar, as Humaira comes running, bringing "a lot of fireflies in her muslin dupatta" and her laughter, full of "the carefree abandon of young girls" (1994c: 235). The days are filled with ramblings and make-beliefs, siestas after lunch, and many more adventures in the afternoon until "servants were sent out to search the surrounding hills and orchards for the runaways" (1994c: 232). The narrator and her cousins believed that every night, they were visited by fairies – the English fairies live in mushrooms and the Muslim fairies in the Caucasus, and vibrant red flowers were "actually dragons with fiery tongues" (1994c: 237). As the narrator puts it in one sentence, it was "a world of fireflies". The story ends with the hustle-bustle of a family photograph taken the day before they leave Almora. Everyone is dressed in their best attire, chairs placed in a row on the lawn for the ladies while the boys cluster around Chachajan (an endearing address for 'uncle'); the children still holding unripe peaches in their mouths when the photographer says "Ready?" As the narrative starts with the approaching view of Almora, it ends with the declining view, as they drive away: "after a few seconds, the banner and the house both vanished in the mist" (1994c: 238). Like "*Ḍālanvālā*", this story, too, ends with an articulation of nostalgia and remembrance on the part of the adult narrator.[301]

Childhood memories and nostalgia are woven in a more intricate craft in the story "*Yād kī ek Dhanak Ǯale*", its English title being "My Aunt Gracie". The difference in the title reflects the focus of the narrative in the two versions. While the Urdu original follows the theme of memories and nostalgic recollections, the English version is fashioned to single out the character of a Goan *āyah*, Gracie, who worked for the narrator's father's close friend, Nasir Chacha (*cācā*, Uncle Nasir). The child narrator is on holiday, visiting Nasir Chacha's seaside flat in Bombay. Nasir Chacha hails from a glorious family in Calcutta,

301 Already quoted. See the end of Section 4.4.1.

with its origins traced back to the *navābs* of Patna. He is friendly, cheerful, and keenly interested in Urdu, Persian, and English literature. Since he is a widower, his son Asghar is brought up in the care of Gracie (1990b: 94–95).[302] The character of Nasir Chacha is central to both versions of the story, although in the English version, Gracie's character takes centre stage. Gracie, a widow, has no family and works for Nasir Chacha to keep her promise to his wife that she will look after their son, Asghar. Gracie is described as a "sturdy but plain" dark woman who looks beautiful when she grins, "flashing her pearly white teeth" (1994b: 56). Gracie is a fascinating discovery for the narrator, whose own ayah is a strict, polished, slim lady. As Nasir Chacha and the narrator's father are busy in each other's company, the narrator spends more time with Gracie and discovers the secret conversations Gracie has with the figurine of the Virgin Mary to help sort out her difficulties. These conversations often mix praying, pleading, and bargaining on Gracie's part; for example, one day, the narrator overhears Gracie saying to the statue: "Look here, you Virgin Mother, if you not find me store-room keys by eight o'clock Indian Standard Time, breakfast late, Nawab Saheb[303] cut off my head. What do you know. You never done work as ayah" (1994b: 58).

Nasir Chacha sends Asghar to the best English school while Gracie speaks "*khicṛī zabān*" (mixed-up language), influenced by both her Goan origins and the Bombay style of unpolished speech. She is highly possessive about Asghar. While the English narrative begins with an introduction to Naisr Chacha, the Urdu original has an added first sentence that sets the temporal setting of the present, as the narrator recollects the past: "Whenever I see the fire extinguishers drive down the city-streets, I am reminded of Nasir Chacha" (1990b: 94). The Urdu story is more reflective regarding the narrator's memories of these holidays as spent in a leisurely manner; as she looks forward to Sundays because on Sundays all sorts of newspapers and literary supplements contain special reports and colourful pictures to flip through. Some days, Nasir Chacha takes her to Juhu Beach and buys her comics and ice cream. The Urdu version's sense of personal reminiscence is extensive, whereas the English story has a tight plot. The Urdu story also projects further into the past beyond the temporal setting, to when Nasir Chacha visited the narrator and her family two years earlier at their house in Dehra Dun. On quiet evenings and long walks through

302 Since the English and Urdu versions differ in certain aspects, I have used both versions in reading this story. The quotations with the year 1990b refer to the Urdu version and 1994 to the English. Quotes from the Urdu version are my translations.

303 Gracie reportedly called Nasir Chacha 'Nawab Saheb' due to his lineage, although Nasir Chacha is rather humble.

the hills, the child narrator forms a bond of friendship with him. The memories of his visit to Dalanwala add another layer of remembrance of the past to the Urdu story.

That summer in Bombay, the wives of Nasir Chacha's friends and colleagues attempt to convince him to re-marry, and a chunk of the narrative is spent in rambling descriptions of this episode with preparations for the engagement ceremony. This rambling narrative style, particularly the episodes leading up to the engagement, has a feeling of listlessness and boredom about them; as narrated by the child, they appear long and tiresome, with no appeal or direct interest to the narrator. It must also be noted that unlike in the previously read stories, the child narrator here does not mingle with children of her age, but her holidays and even the enjoyable, leisurely aspects of these days are told around her curious but calm, almost mature relationships she has with Nasir Chacha and Gracie; the urban setting of Bombay also takes away from the leisurely atmosphere of the hill towns, but the narrator is also immersed in Gracie's world. This is also a trope often revisited in Indian fiction after the Partition, iconically in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* or *Ice Candy Man* (1988). The innocence of childhood and idle curiosity or fascination with the figure of the āyāh is contrasted against the unfathomable hatred and violence of the Partition, as the āyāh symbolises the violated mother/land.

This contrast is well-played out in "*Yād kī ek Dhanak Ǯale*" as the story moves ahead'– in a flash forward – to after the Partition. The child narrator, now an adult, writes that in 1948, she learned that Nasir Chacha left Bombay and now lives in Lahore (1990b: 126). A writer of some fame by now, the narrator goes to visit him in his "small desolate-looking bungalow". The passing of time is portrayed in the description of her first glance at him, sitting "under a bare tree. A few books and Urdu magazines lay before him on an unpolished table" (1994b: 65). He complains that her father left too soon, without notice. The narrator notes that he has grown "old and grouchy" and draws a correlation with the harsh winter: "It was a dreary winter morning. The wind was chilly and an anaemic sun floated listlessly behind the clouds. Nasir Chacha looked ill. He had covered his legs with a worn-out blanket. I was vastly depressed" (1994b: 65). During this meeting, the narrator comes to know that due to loss, loneliness, and grief, Nasir Chacha married Gracie, who delighted to see the narrator grown up, asks her to address her as *chachi*/*cācī*, or aunt. Later, the narrator receives the news of Nasir Chacha's passing away. Having married into an elite 'society' family that resents a Goan āyāh as a family member, Asghar sends Gracie off to Bombay. The narrator, now residing in Bombay, finds it impossible to locate Gracie. When she sees an older woman in a church praying to the Virgin Mary, she is reminded of her aunt Gracie and wonders what unimaginable loss she must have encountered.

The loss after the Partition, the stories analysed suggest, can only be dealt with by preserving the memory of the past. This return to the past is not a restorative return to the origin; neither is it longed for, but only revisited and remembered. In the case of postcolonial nostalgias, the dreams and desires of return are more nuanced in their relations with the colonial affiliations. For post-Partition nostalgia, too, these desires take on a strange shade of guilt as collaborators and resisters overlap. The last example analysed does not hold the event of Partition as responsible for the losses incurred; it holds the flow of time as an indomitable rival. This is recurrent in a few other stories of this collection, too, for example, the story that gives the collection its title, "*Patjhaṛ kī Āvāz*" ("The Sound of Falling Leaves") and "*Ĵin Bolo Tārā Tārā*" (the English title is "The Missing Photograph"; the Urdu title is a refrain from a song, in search of Tara). In "*Yād kī ek Dhanak Ĵale*", Gracie is the portrayal of the mother figure, in her lifelong devotion to Asghar and her profound faith in the Virgin Mary. She is also the symbol of undivided India, profoundly hurt by the violence of separation. In the Urdu version, the narrator makes this plain in the observation: "Even if Ali Asghar would be Gracie's own son, and even if he would have an instinctive love for her, he would have done the same. It is what is done to mothers; and Gracie was definitely a mother" (Hyder/Ḥaidar 1990b: 133).

The awareness of a collective, colossal loss makes it imperative for Hyder to hold on to the past before the rupture. With her post-Partition stories reflective of a nuanced post-Partition nostalgia, Hyder introduced the modern Urdu reader to not only a renewed way of dealing with this profound, inexpressible loss but also with Partition, bringing together the guilt of the collaborator and desire of the resister, later taken up by modernists like Intizar Husain, Abdullah Hussein, and others. In Hyder's nostalgia, the desire is expressed in fond memories, but only for the harmonious, syncretic leisureliness of the past, projected onto the portrayal of childhood days before the divisive lines are drawn – one can say, only for the temporality she explores. While Hyder's stories explore the past, the past does not seem to – in these stories – have an impact on the future or the present, apart from being remembered. This is also reflected in the post-Partition nostalgia she invokes without expressing her yearning for the past. With her pen turned to '*māẓī parasti*', Hyder was one of the writers who brought forth a new literary trend in Urdu, creating a space for readers to experience private and collective leisurely feelings, albeit in the memory of leisurely days and in reading about it. In Hyder's rendition, 'the good old days of leisure', a topic of constant contention in modern Urdu literary traditions, can be said to have arrived at a narrative junction where they are once again enjoyed and celebrated as told through the eyes of a child. In an emotional turn towards narrating the past, Hyder's rendition of the conflicted, collective nostalgia after Partition allows every reader to revisit and relive the time before the rupture,

foray into the childhood days, collectively spent in leisurely ways: "Time is a Tablet Preserved – on which time can have no effect."

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores the dissonant ways leisureliness and idleness are formulated in a conflicted socio-historical junction of the Indian subcontinent. With most writers – particularly Urdu writers – writing for national freedom, political agenda and social progress, narratives of idleness and leisureliness are read as contrasted against this socio-literary set-up. The genre of the Urdu short story – nurtured in an atmosphere of revolutionary politics – addresses the concept of otium in the works of writers who did not adhere to the concept of *taraqqī* as socio-political or literary objectives. In their different registers, otium, idleness, and leisureliness are addressed in dissonant notions of temporalities against the futuristic drive of progress. For Manto, this notion of temporality is explored in his focus on the isolated moment and the aimless, wandering drift – *āvāragardī* – of his idle but critical protagonists. For Hyder, the alternate temporality is oriented towards the past, in remembering and reliving the past in writing or *māẓī parastī*. Reading these temporalities as pitted against the utilitarian, sequential, progressive sense of temporality, this chapter unpacks the negotiation of otium in the context of the subcontinent's Partition – a fragmentation and fissure in the consciousness of the self.

In the disparate and dissonant parsing of these distinctive temporalities, modern Urdu literature gains access to two different ways of conceptualising temporality – the relationship with time. One of these is seen in Manto's pre-Partition stories set in the modern metropolis of Bombay, framing the lives of pimps, prostitutes, unemployed and idle men, told through the eyes of the melancholic wanderer. Manto's portrayal of idleness is more than mere urban rambling; it inculcates a deeper critical agency and distance as a function of otium, which I have read as manifested in the emotion of colonial melancholy. The other India, and one to remain in the public imagination for a long time, is seen in Hyder's post-Partition stories, claiming the narrative of an India of the author's privileged childhood, when time is ravished, almost tasted through the eyes of a young girl growing up in a social setting of apparent communal syncretism, comfortable lifestyle influenced by the colonial elite, bringing these together in a harmonious reminiscing of a tranquil past. However, Hyder deftly negotiates what nostalgia for a time before political independence can mean for a colonised nation. It has to be said that Hyder's stories defy several genre conventions of the tight modern short story, as they seem to merge with narrative styles that are suitable for reminiscing and reflecting on the past – like that of diary

writing, story-telling, and memoir. In their affective temporalities, both writers make it possible for readers to feel time in challenging and liberating hues. Through their distinctive craft of the short story, they release a literary space enabling readers to experience emotions of idleness, indolence, and leisureliness against prose narratives driven by socialist and progressive ideologies.

The registers of otium are also starkly different in the works of both writers. The melancholic idleness of Manto's unemployed and poverty-struck men projects a distinctly marginalised but rebellious voice of resistance against colonial capitalism and nationalist progress. The post-Partition nostalgic portrayals of leisureliness for Hyder's child narrator write about an elite world. Yet, in some ways, that world, too, is marginalised until Hyder introduces it to the Urdu literary sphere. As this chapter has seen, both writers bring a distinctive style in narrating otium in modern Urdu literature; this style is closely linked to their literary careers and remains the hallmark of the distinctive worlds they inhabited. In the differences of their literary worlds, their narrative styles, and their themes, Saʿadat Hasan Manto and Qurratulʿain Hyder, two unlikely writers read together (as this chapter does), share a resounding commonality concerning the Urdu short story of their times – they give the short story the "lonely voice" of the submerged population group, who seek and dream of escape. The progressive episode in Urdu literature remains one of great significance but escape from the drive of progress was also sought by writers within the association, as Faiz's poem in the epigraph to the chapter reveals. In their dissonance with this notion of progress, Manto and Hyder enabled readers – in their loneliness as well as in collective awareness – to feel time in different ways as unified British India transformed into partitioned nations.