

Responsibility, Commitment and Imagination: Glocalist Abrogation of Generic Structures in Aatir's *Straggling through Fire: An Anthology of Proemistry*

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Abstract

*This paper explores the nationalistic abrogation of generic structures in Ghulam Murtaza Aatir's *Straggling through Fire: An Anthology of Proemistry* and establishes that institutionalized conceptualizations of literature are discursive mechanisms which tend to legitimize the authority of power elite. Aatir coins the term 'proemistry', explains his artistic standpoint in his prefaces and composes forty-two poems to question, resist and finally reject Eurocentric claims of romanticism, objectivity, universality and aesthetic pleasure. This paper studies Aatir's 'poems' in the light of his literary conceptions provided in form of two prefaces, explores the rejection of western models of representation, objectivity and universality and validates that art is never apolitical; it can address immediate social, cultural and political crises. The text gives the evidence that instead of portraying flamboyant landscapes or indulging into romanticized abstractions, Aatir's art is packed with concrete images and juxtapositions between the powerful and the powerless. His stance is clear and he stands with the marginalized sections of Pakistan in particular and with the oppressed of the world in general. Without compromising his identity, his art extends its spectrum to the historical issues of the world and he appears as a glocal writer looking at the world from national platform.*

Keywords: Proemistry, Proem, Nationalism, Glocalism, Abrogation, Generic Structures, Margin

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1. Introduction

Ghulam Murtaza Aatir's *Stragglings through Fire: An Anthology of Proemistry* (2021) is an artistic rejection of traditional literary norms and challenges the westernized modes of perception and representation in the spheres of literature, media and history. In order to repudiate conventional artistic tradition, Aatir coins the terms 'proem' and 'proemistry'. Yule (2010) defines coinage as "the invention of totally new terms" (p. 53). Aatir's coinage of proemistry involves the blending of poetry, prose and history. Yule defines blending as "the combination of two separate forms to produce a single new term" (p. 55). Aatir's subjective blending is extended to combination of three forms. In prefaces of his book (2021), he not only explains the coinage of proemistry but also elucidates his literary theory that made him refute the conceptual bindings of generic structures. He calls the artistic units of his text proems, "combination of prose and poetry", instead of poems (p. 16). This paper studies his proems in the light of his propounded literary as well as critical conceptions and establishes that art is political and can perform some immediate social and cultural purposes. Aatir declares his commitment of representing the chaos inflicted upon the weak and believes that social "responsibility" is the "most appropriate word for literature, let alone poetry" (p. 16). The paper explores his stance in his proems that constitute a voice of the marginalized belonging not only to Pakistan but also to the whole world. Instead of romanticizing human condition under the guise of objectivity, universality and aesthetics, his proems celebrate subjective, parochial and political consciousness. His cultural, historical and political consciousness shapes his nationalism. The proems extend his nationalism to glocalism and challenge status quo occupying the central superior place in literary, local and global power structures. The paper investigates consistent binary juxtapositions between the powerful and the powerless and validates that proems originate from a dialectical negotiation between the central and the peripheral. European and Eurocentric models of perception, presentation and evaluation have long been employed to strangle the voice of the margin. The resisting voices are discarded through the discursive barriers of audibility, identification and intelligibility. Aatir dismisses the power of discursive mechanisms and his proems unleash his satire against these mechanisms. The paper studies responsibility and commitment of Aatir's art and establishes that western and westernized modes of representation, classification and evaluation can

be questioned, resisted and finally abrogated as demonstrated in *Stragglings through Fire*.

2. Literature Review

Mansoor (2012) traces the evolution of Pakistani poetry in English and observes that “Pakistani poetry is still endeavouring to forge a distinct identity” because it is caught up among its “Islamic origins”, “colonial past” and “turbulent present” (p. 20). There is an ongoing debate among Pakistani literary intelligentsia to determine the possibility as well as effectiveness of English poetry. Khalique (2017) observes that Pakistani “critics of poetry squarely blame poetry for its inability to analyse social and political issues rationally” (p. 117). Pakistani literary landscape rich in Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi and Persian poetry challenges the emergence of English poetry, and the colonial heritage entangled between acceptance and resistance appreciates as well as questions the validity of English poetic expressions. Khalique records Dr. Mubarak Ali’s claim that “our love for poetry as people is responsible for our current dismal state of social and intellectual affairs in Pakistan” and elucidates the repelling response of Pakistani literary elite against poetry (p. 115). The issue of lingual competence as well as proficiency, among the writers as well as the readers, adds to the ambivalent response to Pakistani English poetry. Being an academician, Aatir is well informed about the controversial status of Pakistani English poetry but he composes his *Stragglings through Fire* nevertheless to resist not only the local but also the global conceptions of art and literature. Religious affiliations, colonial baggage, chaotic present and a profound consciousness of artistic criteria are demonstrated in his poems suggestively. He does not follow traditions; he initiates a new one by providing Pakistani Anglophone poetry a new genre of proemistry.

Rahman (2015) states that Pakistani English poetry is opposed in Pakistan by “extreme nationalists and parochial supporters of indigenous literature” (p. 186). Those in favor of native literature think that poetry produced in colonial language undermines national identity. Aatir’s proemistry, on the

other hand, is a search for a Pakistani English genre that may enable Pakistani poets to express without getting emasculated by the traditional generic restrictions. Aatir's nationalism is undisputable because his proemistry embeds national experiences in intelligible global language. The spectrum of his art is not limited to the Pakistani audience but extended to the worldwide readers.

Gohar, Afzal and Anwar (2019) conducted a corpus based analysis of 21st century Pakistani English poetry and claim that "Pakistani English poetry is more akin to classicism and romanticism than modernism" (p. 312). They studied the frequent metaphors used in Pakistani English poetry and found that love, life and heart are the most consistent metaphors "showing their trend more towards abstractions than towards objects and persons" (p. 319). Though Pakistani poetry is generally regarded a pack of romanticized abstractions, Aatir's art transcends romanticism. His images and juxtapositions are concrete and carry an immediate artistic, social, cultural, political and historical relevance. Instead of indulging into abstractions, his poems are saturated with concrete imagery. Nowhere in his proemistry, does he hide himself under the protective cover of abstracted generalizations. The emotional responses in his poems are not whimsical bursts of some hyper sensitive individual but a rational expression of a responsible citizen. His proemistic art is determined to serve a concrete social purpose and categorically challenges the traditional notions of romanticism, artistic perfection, objectivity, universality and abstract aesthetic pleasure. Proemistry is a new literary genre and no critical work has been conducted yet to encompass its ideological as well as counter-discursive potentials. This research paper is the first work that aims at evaluating proemistic abrogation of western literary and critical conceptions.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper is a literary critique of G.M. Aatir's *Stragglings through Fire* and the work is analysed from glocalist critical sensibility to question, challenge and reject the western modes of representation, classification and evaluation. The issues of Art's responsibility and Artist's commitment towards his people are explored in a glocal context to establish that art can serve a social and ideological purpose. Eagleton (2008) asserts that

“literature is an ideology” and “it has the most intimate relations to questions of power” (pp. 19-20). Literary tradition of creativity and criticism have ideologically supported status quo by defining literature as a self-referential language “loftily removed from any sordid social purpose” (p. 18). Eagleton rejects the idea of literature’s being apolitical and claims that “there is no possibility of a wholly disinterested statement” (p. 12). Literature either supports or resists power. Objectivity is a myth and any claim of an objective approach towards literature serves the interests of the centre by making the peripheral believe that good literature transcends the categories of spatial and temporal experiences. Arnold (1869) in *Culture and Anarchy* defines culture as “the best that has been thought and said in the world” and advocates the timelessness of creative thought by virtually negating the possibility of any parochial belonging (p. 06). Any notion of self-securing perception by working class is anarchic and “the hideous and grotesque illusions of middle-class Protestantism” (p. 63). Arnold’s views of culture and anarchy are grounded upon the belief in a self-sufficient and autonomous liberal humanist subject whose existence transcends his material and historical situatedness and who is bestowed with a timeless mind that can create timeless literature. Bertens (2002) suspects that Arnold’s view of culture is “a move in a struggle for power and status” to keep the marginalized under the perpetual pressure of tradition (p. 7). Eliot (1972) in *Tradition and Individual Talent* [1919], propagates Arnold’s ideas and propounds that the poet has “not a personality to express but a particular medium” and his individuality must be subordinate to tradition (p. 75). Arnold’s timeless culture and Eliot’s superior tradition coupled with notion of objectivity and universality are the traditional literary merits that have been questioned, resisted and rejected by Aatir in *Straggling through Fire*.

Achebe (2003) rejects the idea of universality in literature and observes with pinching irony that “a western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it” (p. 59). The notion of universality keeps the binary of the central and the peripheral intact because English literary tradition vigorously tends to maintain that

the White speak for all and the non-white must make an effort to comprehend the superiority of the western thought by getting rid of indigenous provincialism. Larson (2003) too suspects universality and claims that “universal experiences in literature are cultural responses shaped by our western tradition” (p. 65). In a postcolonial situation, the native writer has to create his own literary tradition to decolonize his art. He is bound to redefine artistic standards and create a counter tradition. Tiffin (2003) observes that the “processes of artistic and literary decolonization have involved a radical dismantling of European codes” (p. 95). A native writer can neither perceive nor express the real existential crises of his people if his art has to move under the yoke of perpetual pressure of the western codes. He is bound to become provincial and go beyond generic restrictions to express the forbidden as Aatir has done in *Stragglng through Fire*. Western literary tradition tends to depreciate nationalism in literature but Fanon (2003) appreciates national literature and calls it “literature of combat” because “it assumes responsibility” of speaking on behalf of its people by challenging the established conceptions of literariness (p. 155). National literature is political as it should be. The so called apolitical stature of western literary tradition is itself a political claim because it tries to mask the politics of constructed forms and meanings. Nationalist writer fulfills a well-defined responsibility of combatting against the politically constructed past of his people and inspiring them “to confront the present as a historic moment” in which celebrated designs of western thought can be discarded and relegated views of nativity can be embraced (Amuta, 2003, p. 160). Aatir’s *Stragglng through Fire* is a nationalistic project of a mind that undertakes responsibility of abrogating western tradition in order to speak for its people.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2002) define abrogation as a “refusal of categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or correct usage” (p. 37). Imperial categories of perception and expression emasculate natives’ sensibilities and tend to make them oblivious of their marginality by inculcating into them the superiority as well as the authenticity of western tradition. Abrogation of literary norms by the marginalized non-whites creates a situation in which the “notions of centrality and authentic” are “questioned, challenged and finally abrogated” (p. 40). *Stragglng through Fire* is an act of abrogation that abrogates literary

criterion of creative patterns and criticism. Aatir not only rejects western literary tradition but also invents his own poetic theory to speak on behalf of the marginalized belonging to Pakistan in particular and of the world in general. It is pertinent to comprehend that he is not global because he is intolerant of globalization which is a revised version of western imperialism; his approach is glocal.

Damrosch (2009) states that glocalism in literature makes writers “treat local matters for a global audience” (p. 109). Glocalism blends the local and the global to address its audience beyond borders. Sometimes global and glocal are (mis)understood as if they were homologous but it is significant to note that this paper conceives; global as a western discursive enterprise and glocal as a counter-discursive resisting strategy. Hayat (2016) is extremely suspicious of literary globalization and asserts that “west-based literary globalization is a business which is flourishing by the profitable reproduction of Eurocentric genres and motifs” (p. 18). Hayat traces a nexus between Eurocentrism and global literary success to propound that “non-European works of literature are selected for circulation on the basis of their market value, not on the basis of their cultural value” (p. 20). Globalization is an extension of capitalist imperialism and tries to mask its ideological mechanism under the guise of transnationalism, objectivity and universality. Aatir’s glocalism claims neither objectivity nor universality because he categorically refutes both these notions and asserts that he stands with the margin. Instead of hiding under any generic nomenclature or ‘ism’, Aatir makes his artistic position crystal clear and calls his work an anthology of proemistry instead of poetry: “Proemistry is of the margin, for the margin, by the margin” and it is “full-blooded expression of the agonies of the weak” (Aatir, 2021, p. 13). Proemistry is all about the downtrodden: “We need to transcend the boundaries of genres lest something that is our responsibility to say should go unsaid under the stress of the genre restrictions” (p. 16). Aatir’s proemistry is committed to a task and he himself calls it political. Tyson (2006) states that critics must clarify “their own psychological and ideological positions relative to the material they analyze” because an

objective analysis is virtually impossible (p. 289). This paper studies *Stragglng through Fire* by employing Aatir's literary conceptions, explores his artistic innovations, celebrates his nationalism and establishes that literary, local and global tenets can be questioned, resisted and rejected through proemistry.

5. Textual Analysis

Stragglng through Fire projects resistance against the power of literary tradition and global enterprise. Classical Petrarchan sonnets, neo-classical poetic diction and decorum, romantic superfluous vagaries of idealism and modern poetic conceptions of objective realism have one thing in common that they do not address the immediate existential issues and primarily focus upon pleasing the senses. From Dryden to Eliot, poets have devised their own poetic theories and created poetry in accordance to their poetic visions. English canon assumes apolitical stature but this neutrality is itself political and promotes the interests of the elite because the reader is made to get involved in a passive consumption of ideologies and the possibility of an active political commitment is simply discarded. Genre constraints strangle poetic perceptions and expressions. Aatir, therefore, from the very beginning of his literary theory, rejects generic models and calls his work proemistry, "blend of poetry and prose, media and history" (Aatir, 2021, p. 13). "Art is never apolitical, nor it should be, nor it should attempt to look so" (p. 17). Aatir's stance is clear. He neither accepts formal limits nor permits tradition to make him choose his content. Never is he bogged down by the compulsion of form; his forty-two proems do not follow any generic pattern; his inexhaustible experimentation enables him to find a new way of expression in every proem. His proems are replete with binary oppositions between the powerful and the powerless who feel, think and act within a contracted space of power discourses. Aatir's sympathies are reserved for the weak and his satire is bitter against the power protected by the discursive formations.

"Questions to Malala" is a vigorous rejection of Eurocentric modes of representation and questions the politics of Malala's saying that "Palestine and Israel should stop fighting" (p. 32). Though the simple sentence seems an impartial apolitical remark yet its political partiality tries to neutralize the atrocities committed by the victimizer and the brutalities committed against

the victimized. Aatir is not neutral; he stands with the wounded because he does not want to let the agonies of the weak be “terminologically dismissed as collateral damage” (p. 18). The ironic binary of “terrorist stones” and “peaceful rockets” is an act of open resistance against westernized patterns of representation, classification and evaluation (p. 33). Media representations, historical archives, critical evaluations and literary productions have traditionally maneuvered to settle Palestinian existential crises with a contrived air of objective “universalist peace” but Aatir sticks to his “parochial belonging” (p. 35). The ironically suggested space of literary production for the rights of the bombarded Palestinians shrinks from epic to elegy, from elegy to couplet and finally from couplet to a humane tweet. The space contracted in the proem is not an abstract metaphoric conceit but a concrete manifestation of systematically confiscated Muslim space. The west is strategically silent about Kashmir and Myanmar but Aatir is not. His glocalism makes him compare Malala with Altaf Hussain and suggests her to “redefine the function of [her] Magic Pencil” which seems to be Eurocentric (p. 34). Without sacrificing his national duty, Aatir speaks not only about his own soil but also about the Muslims across the borders. Intolerant and indifferent to the criteria of literary judgment, he questions even the credibility of the literary awards and prizes.

“How to Write an Award Winning Piece of Pakistani Fiction” seems a continuum of the previous proem: it exposes the discursive formations of power politics masked under the guise of literary expertise. At present, the west is allotted the central space and Pakistan is relegated to the periphery by the west’s objectifying gaze which dismisses the actual lived experiences and constructs Pakistani scene as if it were always about “a degraded cleric” or “a blind woman raped” or “a self-righteous deceptive general” or “a minority member exploited” (pp. 39-40). Aatir reacts strongly against such constructions because they legitimize the western Islamophobia. He believes that one cannot authoritatively comment upon any structure unless one is part of that structure. Systematic exclusions as well inclusions are discursive Eurocentric techniques and Aatir is against any such ‘ism’: “I cannot afford

any vanity of any ism. If one is necessary, I opt for soilism" (p. 17). His concern is not merely local but glocal as Pakistani diaspora is also his audience and he invites them to revisit their loyalties.

"Assurance" condemns western subjugation of the marginalized Palestinians and Native Americans and traces history to redefine the present for assuring a better future. Ironic implications of the proem are evident as it mocks those "who have the right to speak the truth" and whose "missiles have the logic of their own clear in their mind" (p. 40). Power and knowledge work in a relationship of reciprocal reinforcement. Power creates knowledge that legitimizes its discursive operations. He is suspicious of this power-knowledge nexus and ironically recalls that the powerful west had decided "the Red Indians were not meant to live" (p. 40). History is an important constituent of Aatir's proemistry as he claims that "proems can help us keep our memories of our wounds and losses intact" to make us resist the wound inflicting agents in future (p. 14). He assures survival to the Palestinian girl in particular and the marginalized of the world in general by juxtaposing the past and the present of Red Indians who resisted the western oppression and survived. His assurance is glocal and pacifies not only the Palestinian Muslims but also the Pakistani Muslims who have strong religious affiliation with Palestine.

"One Bhutto for Sale" and "Letter to Election Commission of Pakistan" are local allegories mourning the suffocating existence of the margin exploited by the political elite in the name of "Roti, Kapra aur Makan" (p. 41). "In Debt" is also an indigenous story of the downtrodden battling against economic pressure to ensure their survival. His commitment to the oppressed margin is marked because "it is the proemistic responsibility to be with the people, write for them, think for them, live for them, live with them" (p. 17) that finds its conclusive expression through binary opposition between the diasporic and the native in 'A Dialogue between a Crane and a Palm'. The crane symbolizes the diaspora who "fly from environ to environ" according to their own feasibility but the palm stands for those who are rooted in their soil and share the lived experiences of their soil "in all seasons" (p. 78). The proem is national as Aatir's unwavering commitment to his motherland is neither willing to accept any luxury at the expense of his identity nor ready to approve any excuse of betraying his homeland. Art

may politically transcend nations but artist cannot do so in the name of hollow slogans of humanitarianism: "I don't know ignoring one's community which humanity one wants to serve," says Aatir (p. 19). In "To Mr. Ram Chand" when he contradicts the metaphorical repudiation of his nationalism and asserts that though "metaphor is enjoyable" yet "metaphor is also murder" (p. 53). Metaphorical slaughter of individualism and nationalism under the protective cover of aesthetic pleasure is strongly resisted by Aatir. Though he admits "my people can enjoy anything" yet he is the mouthpiece of those nationalists who are highly suspicious of the Universalist functions of art.

Aatir transcends national boundaries only to return home with an augmented awareness of his loss in "My Dear Indian and My Dear Jew", a reminder of genocidal damage inflicted upon the marginalized Native Americans and Jews to raise a question, "Is unity only the privilege of the killers?" (p. 63). The question - if descendants of Columbus, Redcliff and Bush can "have intertwined motives", why the oppressed of the world cannot share a common cause - is the product of critical awareness of the discursive formations which would either dismiss Aatir's people from the history of the blood or would reduce them to the margin (p. 63). Aatir, aware of the politics of representation, ironically keeps asking to include his history "though in the margin" (p. 63). It is pertinent to note that 'though in the margin' appears four times in the proem and the phrase is exactly located in smaller fonts at the margins of the pages thus manifesting the politics of representation and meaning making. Aatir's form is exactly his content in the proem.

In 'Confusion' Aatir's sensibilities encompass cultural, ethnic, historical and political scenario of Pakistan India, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, Burma, Syria, Libya, Egypt, Iraq, England, America and Canada to demonstrate that the marginalized are manipulated, discriminated and exploited all over the world. Wherever one goes, one finds the marginalized hoodwinked by the central. The proem is glocal as well as anti-Eurocentric in treatment of its subject as Europe is poignantly juxtaposed to omniscient divine order that

is “not bound to give any explanation” of its decisions to the downtrodden (p. 45). Aatir’s deliberately constructed binary of the sublime and the condemned questions the validity of the European power and his authorial responsibility makes him resist the manipulating western “assaults on and interferences into our existence” (p. 17). His scathing satire interrogates the western assaults on non-western existence through the binary of atom bomb makers and “those whom atom bombs unmake” in “Elastic Imagination” (p. 60). His anti-western stance challenges the fictional representation of bombarded New York and, speaking for the brutalized, he reminds Bradbury that it was America that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in actuality. The traditional literary practice tends to favor fictional abstractions over concrete manifestation of facts but Aatir refutes such illusionary constructs and invents concrete images that do not let the bleedings of the marginalized flow into the drain of so-called universal objective aesthetic pleasure. He neither forgets nor lets others forget their bloody history under the stress of manufactured literary standards as he believes that in literature there is always an issue of “ratio of politics and morality and aesthetics” (p. 18). Aatir categorically rejects abstractions and obfuscating manipulations of historical facts. In “Explanation” he ironically perceives democratic conceptions as “seriously deficient in explanation” (p. 61). The binary of American people and the rest of the people problematizes democracy and constructs a concrete image questioning the assumed superiority of America over the marginalized of the world.

Aatir’s stance is clear: his affiliation is with the weak and his glocalism makes him write for the oppressed. He is neither impartial nor does he claim impartiality. Impartiality or pretension of being impartial is a political sin committed against the margin. If pain inflicting subject and pain receiving object are observed with the same objective eyes, it means that the object is systematically accused of being the object and the subject is being protected discursively. “An MCQ Test” attacks impartiality of the opinion and challenges the structures that operate in the spheres of politics and literature. As the proemist is intolerant of any claim of apolitical art or opinion, the proem is a sarcastic reminder of the ‘neutral silence’ over the issues of Red Indians, African Blacks, Taliban and Dr. Afia Siddiqi. It is pertinent to note that Aatir’s nationalism selects a particular individual and puts her into a general category of the marginalized groups. He puts disturbing questions

and destabilizes those who are habitual of dismissing troubling interrogations “by an air of impartiality” and find refuge in political silence by opting an indifferent response: “I don’t know” (p. 49). Aatir’s historical consciousness presents slaughter in concrete form rather than in abstract art because he neither appreciates nor provides space for “the pleasure of unintelligible ambiguity” (p. 18). His representation is concrete. Aatir’s concentrated perception and expression strips westernized beauty industry off its mask in “Miss Purdah” by questioning west, “why doesn’t your list of individual liberties include my right to cover myself?” (p. 59). The proem does not present western political silence but sarcastically portrays master’s aggression because if he is asked disturbing questions his “one missile can transform you into collateral damage” (p. 59). The juxtaposition between the western beauty industry and Muslim woman is glocal in its appeal because the worldwide issue of veil is no more an ethnic but a political debate. Moreover, Aatir condemns the nomenclature of ‘collateral damage’ manipulated by the west to conceal its Eurocentric political hegemonic agenda.

Nomenclature politicizes, imprisons and distorts consciousness. It constructs the barriers of “audibility, identification and intelligibility” to strangle the voice of the marginalized because “it is a binding that does not let us think our original way and say our original say” (p. 18). Aatir is suspicious of any practice of discursive nomenclature and repudiates terminological transformation of Kashmiri’s slaughtered corpses into “silenced unidentified bodies” in the proem “To Nameless Graves” (p. 102). His vision is not masked under any assumption of apolitical literariness and he stands with those buried in those nameless graves. Disciplinary mechanisms of representation in literature, media and history tend to dismiss the voice of the marginalized and normalize the atrocities inflicted by the powerful. The powerful willfully refuse to listen to the agony of the marginalized by calling it inaudible; if they happen to listen, they tend to dismiss the voice by calling it unidentifiable; if by some chance, the voice is identified, it is mostly discarded into the category of unintelligible

propaganda of the herd. Aatir's categorization of the voice into "audible", "identifiable" and "intelligible" traces the hierarchical structure of representation, classification and evaluation through which the noise of the killer systematically kills the voice of the killed (p. 102).

Representation, classification and evaluation are discursive techniques of a meaning-making system that normalizes massacre by reducing it to the size of a news item. Aatir is not oblivious of the political anatomy of meaning-making system and promises to the martyrs of APS that "the proems won't let [them] die as a news item" (p. 95). Aatir's longest proem comprising ten pages of *Stragglng through Fire* is an expression of committed consciousness staggered by the environment "where drones and suicide attacks and blasts have been a regular feature" (pp. 16-18). His national consciousness makes him mourn at the mutilated corpses and lets him refute the structural limitations imposed by the mechanisms of representation. "On Deosai" presents Deosai planes as a metaphorical space where mutilation of the intruded, bombarded and exploited is challenged, resisted and rejected. Deosai stands for the marginalized of the whole world and the 'proemist' - Aatir's term for the creative writer of proemistry - assures them survival because "Deosai survives histories" (p. 104). Though his unmasked rejection of the global system of representation is blunt yet his optimism, no matter how hard it is stragglng through fire, cannot be questioned. His "proemistry is a process, not product type of poetry" and he believes that the proemistic process will ultimately overthrow the status quo that is protected by the terminological covers of objectivity, aesthetics and universality (p. 15).

Aatir's proemistic rejection of terminological manipulation of representation makes him stand with the marginalized gemsbok, bison and the baby hunted by a leopard, wolves and lion in "What Matters in a Jungle", "Animanism: Bison Hunt by Wolves" and "Lions in the Zoo", respectively. "The Leopard, beautiful, strong, agile" and the gemsbok "grey, blackish, ugly" expose the partiality of global mechanism of representation that tends to aestheticize the brutal (p. 25). "Long grass camouflages" the wolves and Aatir, without romanticizing the slaughter, unmasks those who are safeguarded by extensive diction of power-driven representations (p. 30). He does not rely on ambiguous abstractions and categorically questions whether the bison hunt should be called animalism "in the prairies of

America" or it should be extended to include American "animanism" in the lands of Native America, Iraq, Syria, Vietnam and Afghanistan (p. 31), the regions not directly named but suggested in the proem "Explanation". The world is divided between the powerful lions and the powerless boys but the immediacy of Aatir's proemistic conception and articulation challenges the "lion's objectifying gaze" that promotes "the privileges of Lions" in a so called "democratic society" (p. 75). He suggests that the internalization of democratic ideals keeps the marginalized stupefied and makes them admit the discursive rights of the powerful in "frightened silence" (p. 76).

The powerful can discursively frighten the already frightened marginalized through disciplinary rules but the "rules are for those who cannot make their own rules" (p. 17). Aatir's empathy with the marginalized makes him devise his own rules and lets him compose his proemistry though he ironically acknowledges that his anthology is "A Proem That I Should Not Write" (p. 50); he transcends the transcendental artistic rules. He is indifferent to the categorization of his proemistry: "I have no vanity that what I am writing is great literature, or simply literature even" (p. 17). The western and the westernized "critics of art" may call him "parochial and propagandist" so "unworthy of good literature" but his unfaltering commitment to his people in particular and to the marginalized of the world in general has invited its audience to think, feel and react beyond the conceptual categories of literature, media and history (p. 50). Instead of romanticizing human condition and neutralizing the discursive power relations between the powerful and the powerless, he has breached the castle of objective universality to liberate the marginalized from the clutches of traditional conceptualizations. He has not put the bandage of universal peace on the ever-bleeding wounds of the marginalized. The proems strip the unhealable wounds off their strappings and make the readers observe actual lived experiences of the weak who have long been straggling through fire.

6. Conclusion

The article does not announce the research questions explicitly. However, the question/issue explored is, Art's responsibility towards its socio-political context. It can be properly concluded on the basis of discussion that Aatir's *Stragglng through Fire* is a creative question to the politicized subjugation of the marginalized and westernized modes of representation that protect the interests of the powerful. Genre boundaries constrict perception, articulation and evaluation. The available structures of representation, classification and evaluation pragmatically restrict the marginalized from expressing their actual losses and their voice is dismissed by the prevailing criteria of artistic impartiality, universality and aesthetics. Aatir is intolerant to every political model that tends to legitimize the discursive operations of racism and genocide. His imagination empathizes not only with his own marginalized people but also with the downtrodden of the world. His nationalism is not a chauvinistic slogan for fan following but responsible glocalism that challenges systems of hierarchical power. His glocalism must not be misinterpreted as globalism. Globalism serves status quo but glocalism resists authority and *Stragglng through Fire* categorically challenges the hegemonic operations of western as well as local elite. Aatir's belief that art should serve a social purpose is practically exercised in the proems. The proems problematize traditional fixation of binaries and perpetually stand with the powerless of the world. His juxtapositions between the powerful and powerless are grounded on concrete historical facts instead of metaphoric abstractions. His stance is clear and an augmented sense of loss makes him reject the traditional bondage of generic restrictions. He has invented proemistry because the traditional standards of poetry, prose, media and history would never have allowed him to express what he wants to express and the way he wants to express. He believes that he has done his job by raising his voice on behalf of the marginalized of the world. Now it is the responsibility of the future artist to express the forbidden and extend the newly invented genre of proemistry as Aatir has practically left margins for extensions and inclusions in his ongoing collaborative book to give voice to the marginalized stragglng through fire.

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