

Reimagining History: *Dara* as a Symbolic Figure in Shahid Nadeem's Play

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ABSTRACT: *History and literature are entwined. Against the prevailing backdrop of misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding Muslims, the study interprets the play 'Dara' by Shahid Nadeem from a new historical perspective. This research paper explores the historical significance of the play 'Dara' in the context of the sociopolitical landscape of Pakistan. The paper employs the lens of new historicism to analyze the play as an interpretation of history and a response to prevailing narratives that paint Muslims as terrorists. The study investigates the relationship between the resurgence of 'Dara' as a new hero and the socio-political climate of Pakistan in the present time. Drawing on Stephen Greenblatt's concepts of representation and the circulation of power, the analysis unveils the play's thematic exploration of power dynamics, manipulation of religious beliefs, and the clash of opposing ideologies. The findings underscore how 'Dara' challenges dominant power structures, promotes inclusivity, and reimagines Pakistan's image. Moreover, it fills a gap in the existing literature by incorporating new historicist perspectives and providing a deeper understanding of "Dara" within its historical context.*

Keywords: Reimagining History, Dara, Symbolic Figure, New Historicism, Power Dynamics, Religious Beliefs, Pakistan

Introduction

The prevalent Western narratives often depict Muslims through the narrow lens of terrorism. In this epoch marked by complex sociopolitical conditions, the Play *Dara* resurfaces the figure of Dara as a symbolic hero and critically examines the contemporary socio-political climate in Pakistan. The play, *Dara*, emerges as a compelling piece of art that challenges existing narratives. The playwright uses the historical character to question the established power structures and societal norms. The study employs Stephen Greenblatt's concepts of representations and circulation of power to analyze how *Dara* contributes to reshaping historical perceptions.

New historicism emerged in the eighties as a new movement and developed quickly. It is now the center of literary theory. The historical angle was thoroughly neglected after the rise of new criticism, and I.A. Richards considers that the text was enough for literary analysis. It was believed that there was no meaning outside the text. However, after the seventies, many scholars in America and England were seeking a historical scholarship in the academic study of literature. They argued that the formalistic principles of New Criticism affected the historical nature of literary works. Catherine Gallagher, in her famous book *Practicing New Historicism* (2000), writes that new historicism "at first signified an impatience with American New Criticism, an unsettling of established norms and procedures, a mingling of dissent and restless curiosity" (02).

New historicists think that text is the product of the culture, which reflects values, ideologies, and the power structure. Text and context belong to the same larger structure. According to Liouis Tyson, new historicists do not differentiate between literary and historical text, fact and fiction. "Any given event – whether it be a political election or a children's cartoon show – is a product of its culture" (26). There is a reciprocal relationship between culture and cultural products. "In other words, all events – including everything from the creation of an artwork to a televised murder trial to the persistence of or change in the condition of

the poor – are shaped by and shape the culture in which they emerge” (269).

Historicists believe that an objective and impartial probing of history is possible and that we can discover the truth through factual inquiry. New historicists think that impartial and objective investigation is not possible. All attempts are tinged by subjectivity. As Fredrick Nietzsche says, there are no facts, only interpretations. Every history is his story. We cannot eliminate subjective elements from any historical study. So, every work reflects the ideologies of the historical moment. All works are interpretations of their time and place.

The paper employs Michael Foucault’s concept of the power-knowledge nexus. History is often fabricated by the elite class for their political benefit. They want to spread specific values that strengthen their political agendas. But Shahid Nadeem, in his play, challenges the power structure and represents an alternative hero. K.K. Aziz writes many examples of distortion and murder of history in his famous book, *The Murder of History* (1993). He mentions that it is common in Pakistan's textbooks to promote Aurangzeb Alamgir as the nation's hero.

Shahid Nadeem, in the form of his play, interprets history differently. He raises questions about Aurangzeb Alamgir’s presentation as a heroic figure in the textbooks taught in Pakistani schools and colleges. He exposes the political use of Aurangzeb by the elite class. Instead, he presented him on the stage as a cruel king who used Islam to take the crown and to get rid of Dara Shikoh. Michel Foucault discusses knowledge and power and their relation to the hidden ideology. Knowledge gives power and facilitates the controlling process. It is tied to the power structures of the society. (Foucault, 1971). Shahid Nadeem offered a new hero at this particular moment of history. It is the resurgence of Dara as a hero from the forgotten pages of history. According to K.K. Aziz, Our history textbooks contain myths, and they distort history. “History has been manipulated, polluted, ill-used, and trampled underfoot” (Aziz 108).

Shahid Nadeem is one of the best playwrights in Pakistan who has a keen eye for history and culture. He co-founded Ajoka Theatre in Pakistan along with his better half, Madiha Gaur. He has written more than 35 plays. His plays have been performed around the world. In our opinion, *Bullah*, *Dara*, and *Black are My Robe* are the best plays. *Dara* (2015) is a historical play about two Mughal Princes who struggled to hold the throne. Elder brother Dara Shikoh was announced as a future king by Shah Jahan himself in 1655. Still, younger brother Aurangzeb usurped the throne in 1659 and used religion to kill his brother Dara Shikoh. He was 44 at the time of his death. The text of the play posed these two characters as two different ideologies. One represents the extreme interpretation of Islam, and the other is a soft interpretation of Islam. It is said that the history of the subcontinent would have been different if Dara had been the king of India.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze how Shahid Nadeem's play *Dara* challenges and subverts the prevailing hero narrative in the socio-political landscape of Pakistan.
2. To explore the intersections between history and literature in the socio-political context of Pakistan by analyzing the portrayal of Dara in Shahid Nadeem's play and its implications for societal values and aspirations.

Research Questions

1. How does Shahid Nadeem's play *Dara* subvert the prevailing hero narrative in the present socio-political landscape of Pakistan?
2. In what ways does the portrayal of Dara in Shahid Nadeem's play reflect the relationship between history, power, and literature?

Significance of the Study

The current study is significant because it explores the intricate relationship between history and literature. It sheds light on the power

dynamics, the clash of opposing ideologies, and the manipulation of religious beliefs. It incorporated new historical perspectives and diminished the binary of history and literature. The study puts the play into sociopolitical history, where *Dara* emerges as a theatrical masterpiece and a catalyst for challenging dominant power structures. It advocates for inclusivity by reimagining the national image of Pakistan.

Literature Review

This review provides a broader understanding of the existing scholarship and research on reimagining history and emerging new values and heroes. In recent history, the nuclear test by Pakistan and the 9/11 incident stand out as pivotal moments. It influences the narrative of history, society, politics, and all art forms. They raise intense media debates, particularly regarding Muslims. Some cast them as terrorists, and a few advocate for them. Islamophobia rises speedily everywhere in the world. Shahid Nadeem's play *Dara* is essential in this context because it will reimagine history and challenge the stereotyping of Muslims. Another similar work that reimagined history is *Moth Smoke*. In his work, *Moth Smoke* (2000), Mohsin Hamid explores contemporary Pakistani society and its complexities in post-nuclear Pakistan. There was class, power, and corruption, which reflected the broader sociopolitical landscape of the country. The play *Dara* and the novel *Moth Smoke* explore common themes such as Islamophobia, power dynamics, family conflict, historical representation, and societal changes. *Dara* and Aurangzeb are portrayed in both narratives as symbolic figures. Both works reimagine history to comment on the current sociopolitical situation and counter the present-day narratives.

In this discussion, the concept of heroes as symbols of values and ideals of society and culture holds excellent relevance. Many scholars examined how heroes are constructed, celebrated, and deconstructed in specific cultural and historical contexts. According to M.A.R Habib (2008), "New Historicism... [is] a kind of discourse situated within a context of cultural discourses, religion, political, economy aesthetic- which both shaped it and in their turn, were shaped by it" (149). It is widely explored how

heroes shape society's collective memory and how national identity has been formed. The researchers employ the concepts of Michael Foucault and Stephen Greenblatt to study the play's text. Foucault's idea of power knowledge provides the philosophical context for the study. The new historicist lens formulated by Stephen Greenblatt has been used to analyze the play's text to uncover the dynamics of the hegemony's power structure. Greenblatt's New-historicism offers a valuable framework for studying and exploring the power dynamics in the literary text as cultural artifacts, embodied with social and political implications.

Stephen J. Greenblatt (1943–) is one of today's most significant literary and cultural critics. He is best known for his influential writings on Shakespeare and English Renaissance literature. Still, his work also encompasses interests in art, architecture, ritual, religion, and culture in the broadest imaginable sense. In a series of groundbreaking books, he has elaborated what he calls cultural poetics, a practice that has for nearly thirty years more usually been called new historicism. As the title *New Historicism* suggests, the central issue in Greenblatt's work has always been the relationship between works of art and literature and their various histories and contexts. His influential book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (1980), has elucidated his ideas through this critical lens. According to Greenblatt, new historicism is not merely a set of principles but a practice that involves parallel readings of literary and non-literary texts from a specific historical period. Peter Barry argues, "It is a method based on the parallel reading of the literary text, and non-literary texts, usually of some historical period" (116). This approach emphasizes the equal importance of both the literary text and its historical context. It seeks to return the text to its generative context, catering to readers' political needs. Thus, new historicism can be seen as a form of politicization within literary studies. Edward Petcher argues that recent historical criticism tends to place "the text back into the context from which it was generated" (292). Therefore, it caters to the political needs of the readers. In light of this view, "New historicization of literary studies is equally a new politicization" (292). Michael Warner observes that "new historicism has a major belief that a text will always be historical, and history would be enclosed in texts" (05).

A Metatheatrical Study of Shahid Nadeem's Play *Dara* (2015) conducted by Farrukh Hameed and Dr. Taimur Kayani examines historical distancing through a metatheatrical perspective in Shahid Nadeem's play. The study aims to probe the myths and anti-hegemonic values in Shahid Nadeem's plays, as explored by Mubashar Altaf in "A Probe of Myths and Anti-hegemonic Values in Shahid Nadeem's Plays." Muhammad Umer Azima, Dr. Muhammad Saleem, and Dr. Umar-ud-Din conducted a study titled *Analyzing Historical Dialectics in Shahid Nadeem's Play* focusing on examining historical dialectics. Dr. Taimur Kayani explores the traces of Brecht's socio-political philosophy in Shahid Nadeem's play "The Third Knock".

While previous discussions and analyses of *Dara* have examined its historical and cultural aspects, there is a research gap regarding the study from the perspective of New Historicism. The present study aims to fill the gap by reviewing and taking the play as an interpretation of history. Every text is the product of its time and culture, encompassing ideological conflicts. The study adopts a qualitative approach and analyses the play in the context of historical and cultural factors. It sheds light on the interconnectedness of literature, history, and politics. It is an essential study in the context of the socio-political history of Pakistan. It employs a New Historicist lens to explore the ideological and power dynamics. It challenges the prevailing concept of a hero and presents an alternative hero with alternative values. It presents *Dara* as a new rising hero.

The researchers delve into the power dynamics, representation, and knowledge production within the play and examine how the resurgence of *Dara* as a symbol of knowledge, art, and humanity intersects with the social and political climate of Pakistan. This research sheds light on the theatrical techniques employed in the play *Dara* that contribute to its historical distancing and engagement with broader social and political issues. Studying historical dialectics and exploring anti-hegemonic values enriches a more profound understanding of the play's complex layers and vital role in deconstructing the hegemonic power structures.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge. It showcases the new perspective on Shahid Nadeem's play *Dara*. It explores the intersections of theatrical society, history, and political dynamics. The research findings deepen our understanding of how art and literature can serve as transformative tools to shape and reform society. The play *Reimagines* history and challenges dominant power structures. Theater and literature can shape and transform people's perspectives.

In short, the literature review provides a foundation for the research paper, highlighting the significance of Shahid Nadeem's play, *Dara*, in reimagining history and examining *Dara* as a symbolic figure in Pakistan. The review draws upon existing scholarship on hero narratives, power dynamics, and the intersections of art, knowledge, and identity. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of artistic works in challenging dominant narratives and reshaping collective memory in the aftermath of significant historical events.

Research Methodology

The researchers employ a qualitative methodology to examine "Dara." We take the play as an interpretation of history and a representation of values. The text of the play, *Dara*, is taken as a primary source complemented by the reading and analysis of K.K. Aziz's *Murder of History*. The paper uses the New Historicist lens to interpret the selected dialogues and passages for the text. The key ideas from Stephen Greenblatt, such as representation and circulation of power, are used to analyze and explore the text of *Dara*. Michael Foucault's philosophical concepts contribute to the study, findings, and conclusion. The play is examined by putting it in the historical context. As Anton Keas (1989) says, "Reinserting a text in its historical context means relating it to a vast and varied field of cultural representations" (04).

A qualitative study has been conducted, which involves a close reading of the play alongside K. K. Aziz's *Murder of History* (1993) to interpret the narrative. The critical study aims to discover *Dara* and Aurangzeb's presentation as symbolic figures in the text. Through this framework and

method, the present study aims to comprehensively understand the play's historical interpretation and social and political implications within the context of history. The researchers primarily rely on textual analysis. The researcher incorporates other relevant texts, such as *Murder of History*, to provide contextual understanding. Dialogues, passages, and scenes are selected after thoroughly reading the play and considering their historical and cultural implications. Stephen Greenblatt proposed and developed the new historicist concepts of representation and circulation of power. The text is analyzed to explore the representation of power and circulation of ideas. Throughout the study, the researcher maintains a reflexive and critical stance. For the study, we consider Pakistan's socio-political context. The findings and conclusion are drawn based on examining the texts and applying the new historicism. This qualitative study deeply explains the play *Dara* concerning culture, history, and society.

Theoretical Framework

New historicists assert that every work of literature is inevitably influenced by the circumstances and time in which it was written. Simultaneously, the interpretation of a literary work is also shaped by the reader's beliefs, prejudices, and cultural environment. A new historicist critic examines literature within a broad historical framework, exploring how the author's time influenced the work and how it reflects its historical context. It is acknowledged that our interpretations and the questions we bring to the work are also influenced by the socio-historical context in which we find ourselves.

Representation is a significant concept within new historicism. Scholars within this framework argue that reality is never directly accessible but always mediated through narratives and representations. Robson writes about "how images, objects, narratives, and representations are produced, reproduced, consumed, traded and circulated, and how they change value as they move from one area of a culture to another" (02). Every representation involves adding or subtracting facts; therefore, a conflict arises between reality and its representation. How bodies function, the differences between men and women, the nature of passion, the

experience of illness, and even the boundaries between life and death are all intertwined with particular representations. “Works of art ‘are structures for the accumulation, transformation, representation, and communication of social energies and practices’” (Robson 23). Michel Foucault's notion that we can only access representations, not the reality of the past, resonates within the framework of new historicism.

The circulation of power is another fundamental aspect of new historicism, drawing from the influential ideas of Michel Foucault. According to Foucault, power is not held solely by individuals at the top but circulates in all directions within society. Power flows through various social levels and at all times. It manifests through the exchange of material goods, the exchange of people through institutions such as marriage and slavery, and the exchange of ideas through the discourses produced by a culture. No individual possesses absolute power, but dominance is maintained through power circulation across different discourses, such as religion, science, law, and fashion. Stephen Greenblatt suggests that family and state institutions play a role in maintaining power structures by regulating individual actions. While individuals are subject to sociopolitical constraints, they retain agency and can resist dominant power structures. Louis Tyson noted that human identity is an ongoing negotiation between freedom and constraints. In *The Touch of Real*, Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt write, “New historicism is the anecdotal, fragmentary method, which rests on the principle of representation” (36). So, there is always a conflict between reality and its representation. “The way bodies are understood to function, the difference between men and women, the nature of passion, the experience of illness, the borderline between life and death are all bound up with particular representation” (15).

There is no rigid differentiation between historical and literary texts in the context of new historicism. The same analytical tools are applied to studying historical and literary accounts. Both texts are understood as narratives; no overarching interpretation or unified theory can explain all phenomena. Instead, constantly evolving, dynamic, and unstable discourses are shaped by culture. New historicists view reality as elusive,

with all representations being fluid and products of culture. Cultural categories, such as normal or abnormal, sane or mad, are subjective and are controlled and produced by sociopolitical forces. Even historical analyses are seen as personal interpretations rather than objective truths.

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It circulates by never-ending process and proliferation of exchange, “(1) the exchange of material goods through such practices as buying and selling, bartering, gambling, taxation, charity, and various forms of theft, (2) the exchange of people through such institutions as marriage, adoption, kidnapping, and slavery and (3) the exchange of ideas through the various discourses a culture produces” (Tyson 270). No one has absolute power in his own right. “To maintain dominance, his power must circulate in several discourses, for example, in a discourse of religion, science, law, fashion” (Tyson 284-285). “We must say that there is a new assertion of power by both family and state to determine all movement within the society” (Greenblatt 02). He perceives thus human beings as subjects not fully accessible and “the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society” (Greenblatt 256).

The Key Principles of New Historicism

The fundamental Principles of new historicism provide a theoretical framework for this study. The play *Dara's* will be read and interpreted in the light of these key concepts of new historicism. By applying the principles of New Historicism, this paper aims to discover how the play challenges hegemonic narratives. It reimagines history and promotes inclusivity by offering a counter perspective on historical figures and events.

The Interconnectedness of Literature and History

New Historicism asserts that history and literature are intertwined. It says both are products of culture and reflect their time's ideologies, values, and power structures.

Power Dynamics and Representation

Power operates through various discourses with society, such as law and science. Fashion and religion. Individuals, as well as institutions, maintain dominance by circulating power across different discourses. Representation is seen as subjective, fluid, and influenced by sociopolitical forces.

Subjectivity and Interpretation

New Historicism challenges the concept of objective historical truths; it argues that all historical facts are only interpretations and all realities are subjective, shaped by ideologies, and are products of the culture. Fredrick Nietzsche's assertion that there are no facts, only interpretations, encapsulates this perspective.

Critique of Dominant Narratives

New Historicists seek to dismantle and deconstruct the dominant narratives. They challenge established power structures. Their objective is to uncover the marginalized voices and neglected perspectives. It offers alternative interpretations of history and literature.

Cultural Context and Circulation of Ideas

New Historicists emphasize the value of situation texts writing their historical and cultural context. It investigates how values, ideas, and representations circulate within society and influence and shape cultural products.

Methodology of Parallel Readings

New Historic employs the method of parallel readings of both literature and one literary text from specific historical periods to uncover the interplay between culture and cultural products.

Agency and Resistance

New historians recognize that individuals retain agency and can resist dominant power structures. Literature serves as the site of contestation where alternative narratives and leaves can be articulated.

Data Analysis

In this section, we adopt the lens of new historicism to analyze the historical play *Dara*, which dramatizes the conflict between two brothers, Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb Alamgir, during the Mughal era. The researchers in this section employ the fundamental principles of New Historicism to investigate the play's text. The study uses Textual analysis as a method to understand the relationship of the text with its context. Dara Shikoh, the crown prince of India, was usurped by Aurangzeb, who employed treachery and deceit to capture the throne. Shahid Nadeem brings this sixteenth-century conflict to the theater within the context of present-day Pakistan. This analysis explores how the play represents history within this contemporary period.

Aurangzeb was glorified as a hero in Pakistani educational textbooks (Aziz). At the same time, Dara Shikoh was neglected mainly because the powerful class wanted to control knowledge production and dissemination to maintain their hegemony in the country. However, through *Dara*, Shahid Nadeem circulates anti-hegemonic values and challenges the prevailing ideologies. According to Stephen Greenblatt, every work of literature is a product of its socio-political culture. It reproduces existing values, reinforces the status quo, presents alternatives, and questions the dominant ideology.

By examining *Dara* through the lens of new historicism, we delve into how the play reflects and reframes history within the post-9/11 context.

It highlights the struggles between conflicting ideologies, power dynamics, and the representation of historical figures. Shahid Nadeem's portrayal of Dara as a neglected hero offers an alternative perspective, challenging the dominant narratives perpetuated by the powerful class. This analysis sheds light on the play's role in circulating anti-hegemonic values and questioning the established socio-political order.

Another aspect to be examined in the stories is the circulation of power. New historicists believe that "Power is not only held by a ruling class of society and imposed upon those below them but is at work in all interactions, conflicts and communications" (Malpas 61). This section discusses these aspects in the characters and setting of the play *Dara*. The play compares Dara with Aurangzeb as they represent two ideologies. The textbooks and the history books say, "The third son of Shah Jahan was Aurangzeb. He was a very good person from the account of temper and aptitude. He had the qualities of consistency, statesmanship, and comprehension" (Nadeem 42). But in the play, Dara Shahid Nadeem exposes the nature of Dara and Aurangzeb through Shah Jahan. "You have intelligence, compassion, not a lazy bone in your body, you are shrewd, brave and peace-loving, Dara, and you are perfect!" (Nadeem 87). The nature of Dara and Aurangzeb is revealed through Shah Jahan's dialogues. Dara's focus is on education, knowledge, and intellectual pursuits. On the other hand, Aurangzeb is driven by ambition. The play portrays a hero who has values such as a love for education and respect for humanity and diversity. It challenges the prevailing notion of a hero propagated by the ruling elite to strengthen their rule and power structure. Dara emerged as a much-needed symbolic figure in modern-day Pakistan. The play showcases that all Muslims are not terrorists. There are figures similar to Dara who love art, respect all religions, and accept all differences. As we can see in the text, "The people of Delhi adore Dara. (Nadeem 21). When Dara appears, a large crowd gathers to glimpse their hero. There is an atmosphere of excitement and celebration. This reflects the love and adoration of the people for Dara Shikoh. Dara is a beloved figure. He is portrayed as a symbol of progress and hope in the darkness. It also counters the negative stereotypes associated with Muslims in the post-9/11 time. Dara embodies the values of love, unity, and peace. The

play presents Dara as a rising hero figure. It helps to reshape the image of Pakistani society. Shah Jahan says, “You are my Crown Prince. (Nadeem, p.86). It sheds light on the progressive vision of Shah Jahan. He prays to Almighty that his vision will be taken away if he witnesses more violence, conspiracies, and deception. His prayer signifies a longing for a peaceful, harmonious future, progress, and prosperity. The vision aligns to reimagine history and portray Dara as a new hero against oppression and injustice. The play promotes the values of peace, knowledge, and humanity. Dara emerges as hope for the future of the land. It contributes to the larger discourse of reshaping the image of Pakistan. As a woman said, “Prince! You are the angel of blessing for us, prince. We sacrifice our lives and belongings for you” (Nadeem 07). Sarmad, the naked fakir whom Aurangzeb hated, gave the distressed people hope, and he announced Dara as king and the leader of the Hindustan. He says, “I pronounce the kingship of Dara”. People shouted, Zindabad king Dara Shekoh. People began to celebrate it. They began to dance and sing. The folks and faqirs loved Dara.

Dara: O citizens of Delhi, o the citizens of Hind, whatever I had done, I had done this to magnify Hindustan, to make the Mughal empire strong. No such force exists which can break my relationship with you. My love for the people of Hindustan is immortal (Nadeem 08)

It depicts the deep admiration and support that Prince Dara receives from the masses. He is an angel for them. Sarmad, a fakir who hates Aurangzeb due to his oppressive vision, pins hope with Dara. He accepts Dara as king and leader of the land. It shows Dara’s connection with the people and his role as a unifying figure. The play painted Dara as a new hero figure deeply needed in the post-9/11 era. Society needs values of love, sympathy, diversity, and unity. He regarded Islam and Hinduism as two oceans. “Spectator II: If Dara is king, then things are different. He is an admirer of art and an open-minded ruler. Dara lives in our hearts. He is the one who is our king. He is our hope, faith, and expectation” (Nadeem 21).

The play portrays Dara as someone who sees these two religions as vast oceans. It signifies his sense of inclusivity and harmony. He recognizes the values and richness of both religious traditions. Dara emerges as a symbol of peace, unity, and love. He rejects narrow-minded religious fundamentalism. The dialogue emphasizes the impact and popularity of Dara. He resides in the hearts of ordinary people. He is a beloved leader for the masses who inspires admiration, trust, and optimism among the people of the land. Dara's representation challenges the growing narrative that Muslims are terrorists. The play participates in reshaping the image of Pakistan. It reinforces the significance of progression and inclusive vision for society. Dara rises as a unifying force and source of hope and faith. It promotes alternative values that counter bigotry and division.

Aurangzeb, during his rule, adopted intolerant behavior towards minorities. He imposed ruthless laws on the innocent masses. He destroyed the values of Hindustan. He banned women from going inside the Dargahs, holy places. He says, "We must tax all non-Muslims; we will force conversions. I will bring this situation under Aurangzeb's control; you cannot lead if you do not kill!" (Nadeem 101)

It highlights Aurangzeb's intolerant behavior towards minorities. He imposes ruthless laws on innocent people. He takes violent acts to destroy the values of humanity, diversity, and empathy. He neglects the desires and needs of the masses. He is an oppressive ruler. He bans women from entering Dargahs (holy shrines). He believes that killing is necessary for power and position. He claims himself as the servant of Allah to fool the innocents. Some books favor his militant ideas, and this play challenges his authority and proposes an alternative hero in the form of Dara, who is humble, loving humanity, and embodies mercy and diversity.

The study explores the power dynamics in the play. The play painted Dara as a new hero who stands against violence and religious bigotry, promoting tolerance, inclusivity, and preservation of values. It sheds light on the political and social climate of Pakistan. The play criticizes oppressive policies and destructive fundamentalism. The play draws attention to the recurring patterns of oppression. It also highlights the

destructive nature of religious extremism and violence. It endorses the need to present the forgotten vision of Islam that promotes freedom, diversity, and protection of human rights. Dara is presented as a symbol of resistance against religious intolerance. Dara is empathetic, inclusive, and compassionate. But in the textbooks of Pakistani institutions, Dara is shown as weak, cowardly, and strayed. Textbooks do not “mention how Aurangzeb ascended the throne” (Aziz 21). Books say Dara was defeated by the brave and god-fearing Aurangzeb many times and ran from the battlefield. “Dara’s army was defeated, and he ran away from the battlefield. Aurangzeb’s glory was set because of that war” (Nadeem 43). Shah Jahan aversions Aurangzeb because of his hunger for the throne. In the play, the author says, “Shah Jahan was found of Aurangzeb’s erudition and knowledge” (Nadeem 45). The play painted Aurangzeb as deceitful, and he framed Dara. He also captured Prince Murad. And he thinks deception and lies are necessary to maintain power and hold.

AURANGZEB. The constraints are golden,
Murad. It is for your benefit.

MURAD. You swore on the Quran!

AURANGZEB. Small deceptions are sometimes
necessary –

MURAD (interrupting). Liar!

AURANGZEB (continuing). – to fortify Islam”
(Nadeem 24)

Aurangzeb is portrayed as a figure who does not hesitate to use religion to strengthen his power. The ruling class exploits religion to cement their rule. ‘Dara’ portrays the character of Aurangzeb as deceitful and manipulative. It reveals his framing of Dara and capturing Prince Murad, indicating his willingness to employ deception and lies to maintain his power and control. Aziz writes in *Murder of History*, “Aurangzeb Alamgir destroyed Hindu temples, enforced a harsh version of the Islamic law of one particular school, dispossessed and incarcerated his father,

murdered his brothers, proscribed all liberal thinking, banned music and painting(73). The exchange between Aurangzeb and Murad highlights the tension within their relationship. Aurangzeb attempts to justify his actions by claiming that the constraints placed on Murad are for his benefit, suggesting that it is necessary to restrict Murad's freedom to safeguard the interests of Islam. However, in disbelief, Murad reminds Aurangzeb of his oath on the Quran, expressing his disillusionment with Aurangzeb's deceit. It also exposes the power dynamics and the manipulation of religious beliefs for political gains. It painted the Aurgangeb's character in contrast to the character of Dara Shikoh. It positions Dara as a person who embodies integrity, honesty, and humanity and opposes the corrupt practices employed by Aurangzeb.

It exposes the moral side of King Aurangzeb, who employs Machiavellian principles to maintain power. After gaining political authority, he justifies his actions by invoking the idea of the fortification of Islam. He implies clerics to trap his brother. It is obvious when Dara says to the Qazi, "With respect, your honor, this whole trial is meaningless. You and I are both pawns. This is between my brother and myself" (Nadeem 74). Aurangzeb hires the services of the Mullah to fabricate the case against innocent Dara. He presents Dara to the public as a heretic who lacks faith and belief. He creates an illusion of a fair trial. Qazi has already decided Dara's fate. And Dara is also aware of the true nature of this mock trial and contrived justice. Qazi is merely a pawn in the fraudulent game orchestrated by the tyrant. It shows the manipulative nature of Aurangzeb. He uses religion as a tool to murder Dara. It exposes the more recent ideological conflict in present-day society. It comments on the present political situation where our elite class has been being used by the Western imperialist powers.

Aurangzeb turned down all appeals to avert the death of Dara. Aurangzeb ordered, "Begin the proceeding of the case fast. All of you arrange the material, witness, and appoint the pleaders and Imams of Mosques to advertise this case. And yes, choose the authors of religious court carefully to hear this case" (Nadeem 13). Even though he is satisfied with the death of Dara, he hangs the headless body of Dara on the Lahori door,

and the severed head is sent in the box as a gift to his father, Shah Jahan, and sister, Jahan Ara. When Dara and Aurangzeb were young, they had opposing values. They think differently. They symbolize two separate ideologies.

YOUNG ROSHANARA. How can he be a Muslim, Baba? He did not even have clothes on.

YOUNG AURANGZEB. He is not a real Muslim.

YOUNG DARA. Clothes are irrelevant” (Nadeem 37).

Aurangzeb’s conversation with the naked Faqir exposes his intolerance, hypocrisy, and narrow vision, who can see only on the surface of things. Appearance is against reality.

FAQIR. It may be polite to wait and see your father –

AURANGZEB (interrupting). I said leave, you a worshipper of idols!

FAQIR. I am a Sufi, Sire, a Muslim, not a Hindu...

AURANGZEB. How dare you call your naked dancing Islam?” (Nadeem 41)

It displays the stark ideological and moral difference between Dara and Aurangzeb, between tolerance and violence. Aurangzeb is determined to proceed swiftly with the case against his brother Dara. He instructs his subordinates to orchestrate the necessary measures to trap Dara. He orders witnesses and religious authorities to ensure the proceedings according to his desires. It signifies the highly ambitious nature and lack of empathy in Aurangzeb. The play underscores the recent historical events and political murders in Pakistan, orchestrated by the Western imperialist powers for their imperial gains.

The appearance and ideas of the naked Faqir challenge Aurangzeb’s ideology. His insult and calling him a worshipper of idols showcases his narrow-mindedness and extremist interpretation of the faith. He was

unable to appreciate and see the depth of faith and spirituality practiced by naked faqir and Dara. His actions and ideas reveal his dogmatic approach to religion and inability to accept alternative perspectives or practices. The powerful in present-day Pakistan are unable to see the beauty in diversity. Society is creeping into the pitfall of dogma. The play showcases the ideological divide in society and examines the clash between two opposing sides. It highlights the importance of embracing diversity and inclusivity.

All factions, religions, and communities adore Dara. He has become the symbol of unity and beauty in diversity. When Dara was captured and tried to wait for his death, many people, including Jahan Ara and Danishmand, attempted to prevent the death of Dara. But Aurangzeb did not heed any piece of advice. He wants the throne and power at any cost. Nadeem implies that Pakistan's ruling elite choice indicates their inner desire for wealth and power. They serve the Western agendas. Danishmand beseeched Aurangzeb for Dara's life and said that Dara had been humiliated. "Therefore, I propose Gwalior prison, let him sit and read in the dark for the rest of his days" (Nadeem 49). But Aurangzeb argues that his forefathers did not spare brothers for the throne and power. Danishmand beseeches in these heart-wrenching words with Aurangzeb. "Your religion, Sire, your mercy, and your bloodline call for sparing your brother's life. (Nadeem 49). Danishmand begs to spare Dara's life. History tells us how the desire for power never hesitated to eliminate their relatives, even brothers. Aurangzeb sees the elimination of his brother as necessary for the establishment of power. He wants to secure his authority and crown at any cost. It reveals the tension between pursuing power, justice principles, and family love. Danishmend portrays the voice of reason who appeals to Aurangzeb's morality and religious sentiments to spare Dara's life. But ruthless ambition has no value for family bonds and morality.

Findings

History has been reimagined in the play by Shahid Nadeem in the context of the historical landscape of Pakistan. It challenges the hegemonic

narrative surrounding the representation of Muslims as terrorists. The new hero, Dara, is portrayed as embodying the values of humanity, knowledge, peace, and love for art. The study has found a link between the presentation of Dara as a resurgent hero and the sociopolitical context of Pakistan. It showcases the ideological conflicts and arguments around progressivism and fundamentalism in society. The researchers applied the New-historicist lens to explore the representation of these conflicts in the play. The study is drawn upon the concepts of representation and circulation of power proposed by Stephen Greenblatt to understand the dynamics within the play. It foregrounds Dara as a symbolic figure who rises and challenges the prevailing power structure. The play compares the new hero, Dara, with the old declining hero, Aurangzeb. They both have contrasting values and ideologies. The analysis also uncovers the power's misuse of religious sentiments and beliefs. It highlights the consequences of the promotion of intolerance. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the play *Dara*. It is a significant work where history has been reimagined to reshape the image of Pakistan. It showcases the role of historical reinterpretation in challenging dominant structures.

The findings of this research reveal the transformative power of Shahid Nadeem's play in challenging the hegemonic power structures. It underscores that history has been murdered in Pakistan's educational curriculum. The play *Dara* celebrates art, knowledge, and humanity by positioning Dara as a symbol of resistance against the prevailing narratives.

The reinterpretation of history through *Dara* is an artistic endeavor and a conscious effort to rectify and reshape Pakistan's image. "To maintain dominance, his power must circulate in several discourses, for example, in a discourse of religion, science, law, fashion" (Tyon 284-285). The scope of the analysis primarily focuses on the play *Dara* and its impact on recent history. Future research could expand on this work by exploring the reception and influence of the play beyond Pakistan's borders.

Conclusion

The present study delved into the importance of Shahid Nadeem's play *Dara* as a symbolic figure. The play has been studied as an interpretation and representation of history. It has a vital role in the circulation of power and is challenging to the hegemonic structures. In the form of Dara, an alternative hero has been projected in the play with a different values system, which is needed in Pakistan. Dara is a new Muslim figure who embodies values such as a love of art, a craving for knowledge, a longing for peace, and respect for humanity. The play presents Dara and Aurangzeb as symbolic figures with distinct values. Shahid Nadeem, in the form of Dara, offers a counter-narrative that emphasizes inclusivity and rejects religious extremism. New historicist methodology enriched the analysis by examining the relationship between the text and context. Michel Foucault's concepts of circulation of power and Stephen Greenblatt's concept of representation have provided valuable insight into the dynamics in the *Dara*. The analysis exposes the interplay of power, ideology, and historical reinterpretation. The findings tell us that *Dara* challenges the hegemonic power structures and foregrounds the alternative narrative that emphasizes the values of inclusivity, peace, and tolerance. The play served as a medium for reimagining history and reshaping the image of Pakistan.

Finally, this study showcases the potential of art and literature in shaping society's perception and understanding of historical events and the complexities of power dynamics. The play represents history entwined with literature and reinterprets history. This study contributes to a more inclusive and better understanding of the present and the past. The study endorses fostering pluriversity and paving the way for an equal, egalitarian world.

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