

**AIPS Short-Term Research Grant Project Proposal**  
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I am applying for an AIPS Short-Term Research Grant to fund one month of archival research in Lahore for my second book project, *Voicing Dissent: Urdu Literary Modernism and the Progressive Writers in 20<sup>th</sup>-century South Asia*. The book offers a new account of Urdu fiction by progressive and modernist writers in Pakistan and India from the 1930s to the 1960s. It argues that short literary forms in Urdu and Hindi became a primary mode of dissent to Pakistani and Indian nationalisms, and to critique life in the new nations.

The book relies on Urdu literary journals from the 1930s to 1950s, in which progressive and modernist fiction was published. Since 2014 I have been collecting files of the journals *Saqi*, *Adab-e Latif*, *Zamanah*, *Nigar*, *Makhzan*, and *Naqush*. I am applying for AIPS support to fill in the remaining gaps in my collection. Government College University in Lahore holds a complete run of *Naqush* and a large collection of twentieth-century journals. In addition, I will work with personal collections held by the families of Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Saadat Hasan Manto in Lahore. I have been invited by Salima Hashmi and Nusrat Jalal to work this summer at the Faiz Foundation Trust and the Manto Archive, respectively, in Lahore.

*Voicing Dissent* takes a multilingual and multi-sited approach to Urdu literary modernism in South Asia, connecting writers across languages (Hindi and Urdu) and locales (Delhi, Bombay, Lahore, Allahabad). It joins the work of the All-India and the All-Pakistan Progressive Writers' Associations to the emerging scholarship on global literary modernism, showing that in form and style the progressive writers drew from both global modernist discourses and the resources of classical Urdu aesthetics. Against Urdu scholarship that views modernism (*jadidiyat*) as a post-colonial phenomenon, my study demonstrates that progressivism should be understood as part of the history of Urdu literary modernism in South Asia. Progressive writers linked formal experimentation to political liberation, imagining alternate futures opposed to the nation-state.

Progressive writing had broad impact across multiple languages and media, including drama, radio, and film. Urdu progressive writers were read widely by Hindi authors, including those involved with the modernist "New Story" and "New Poetry" movements in Hindi. Drawing on my background in both Hindi and Urdu, *Voicing Dissent* reads across this linguistic divide to excavate common literary practices and concerns among Hindi and Urdu writers in the 1950s and 1960s. These writers shared the practice of formal innovation, the use of symbolist, surreal, and modernist effects, and a commitment to form over content that reshaped the modern Urdu and Hindi literary fields in the postcolonial period.

Recent surrealist writing in Urdu continues the progressive enterprise of imagining alternative futures. The work of surrealist writers Khalida Husain (1938-2019) and Hasan Manzar (b. 1934) shows how surrealism and science fiction became strategies to conjure other ways of being against the backdrop of partition and military dictatorship. The book's final chapter explores how these authors integrate elements of surrealism and science fiction to interrogate gender, class, place, and identity in postcolonial Pakistan.

I have also applied for a Senior Short-Term Research Fellowship from AIPS for two months. The longer duration of that fellowship would allow me greater access to the archives and time to research at Punjab University in Lahore. If that longer fellowship application is not successful, I would accept the short-term travel grant. A short-term travel grant would allow me to access the archives this year and complete a draft of the book by summer 2021.