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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**Voices from the Periphery: Sindh, Internal Colonialism, and Literary Resistance in Pakistan (1947)****Farukh Aziz**

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The masses coalesced around the Muslim League, placing their faith in a new Muslim state of Pakistan, assuming that once it materialized into reality, they would experience freedom for all intents and purposes after protracted decades of victimization and alienation suffered during colonial rule. However, while the heard melodies proved not sweet, the unheard ones were never sweeter. Freedom tropes fell short of coming to fruition, as the state was dominated by a coterie of seigneurs (landed aristocrats), mandarins (bureaucrats), and praetorians (military elites). The poor endured the brunt of this troika's oppression, under whose dominance the system generated novel modes of exploitation, culminating in what may painfully be described as "internal colonialism" and "structural oppression." This state of affairs occasioned dismay and demoralization among the Sindhi intelligentsia. Abdul Karim Gadai, occupying a singular rank in the pantheon of Sindhi poetry, embraced resistance poetry to express his disenchantment with the system. His poems move readers' heartstrings. This study explored post-colonial Sindh and the milieu in which Gadai crafted his poetry. The study demonstrated that Gadai was profoundly affected by disappointment with freedom, Pakistan, and state institutions. The application of deductive thematic analysis allowed the study to remain focused on predetermined research objectives and questions, ensured a value-free and objective enquiry, and supported the development of a coherent and well-substantiated conclusion.

Keywords: Independence; Postcolonial Pakistan; Sindh; Internal Colonialism; Structural oppression; Disillusionment; Resistance.

Introduction

The mid-twentieth century witnessed the weakening of British colonial power, setting in motion a rapid process of decolonization. The Indian subcontinent, like many other colonies, wrested its independence from Britain, giving rise to the two sovereign states of India and Pakistan. The establishment of Pakistan came at a heavy cost, with the Partition of united India emerging as one of its defining consequences. As Crane observes, "The birth of modern India coincided with the horrors of the partition, which left

somewhere between half a million and a million dead” (64). In 1947, the subcontinent became the site of an unspeakable human tragedy, manifested in mass displacements, religious chauvinism, rapes, murders, arson, and absolute chaos across India. It also marked the largest mass movement of people in recorded history (Ziring 69).

The Muslim League succeeded in mobilizing massive popular support for the Pakistan scheme by promising a “progressive and modern welfare state.” This vision gained traction among the intelligentsia of regions that were to constitute Pakistan. The intellectual vanguard, which had earlier waged a ferocious struggle against imperial power, now threw its weight behind the demand for Pakistan in the belief that independence would translate into freedom in all respects. Even sections of the literati for whom the Muslim League, dominated by the urban and semi-urban petty bourgeoisie, and its demand for Pakistan had never passed muster, remained sanguine about the transformative possibilities of the new Muslim state. They anticipated land reforms, the dismantling of feudal structures, and a reduction in class inequalities. The Progressives, in particular, who had long been scathing about the League’s communal and reactionary character, executed a dramatic volte-face at the moment of Pakistan’s creation by temporarily renouncing their socialistic, non-communal, and secular stance (Khizar Ansari 233–234). The freedom movement thus led people to pin high hopes on the attainment of Pakistan.

With independence, indigenous rulers assumed power from the colonial masters. However, the euphoria of *Azadi* soon evaporated. As Ziring (71) notes, the Muslim League carried its lofty pledges to excess, promising far more than it could realistically fulfill—indeed, more than what either the British or the Congress had offered. As the Pakistan scheme began to assume a concrete shape, the party fell into the hands of elements who were neither altruistic nor sincere. Most were driven by self-aggrandizing political ambitions, reducing politics to a struggle for power rather than a civic responsibility.

Heard melodies were not sweet; yet the unheard proved no sweeter. The known devil, it appeared, was not much worse than the unknown angel. Inequalities deepened into systematic oppression, and independence signified little more than a change of rulers, replacing foreign elites with indigenous ones while governance continued its downward trajectory. The colonial system was brazenly replicated through new modes of exploitation. For progressive writers in Pakistan, the *manzil* (destination) remained distant. Mir and Ali Husain note that the so-called freedom came to be perceived as a mere transformation of domination from one form to another, prompting progressive writers to turn to literature as a means of forging political consciousness among the masses through a discourse of resistance (60). Their critique of Muslim League politics, and of the class interests it safeguarded, surfaced early and with considerable intensity

میں کرداروں بس ہے، فرق
ہے پرانا کھیل باقی!

A review of the existing literature reveals that while books on various aspects of Sindhi literature have accumulated in abundance, there remains a striking paucity of material that captures the reactions and responses of Sindhi writers in general, and poets in particular, to the tumultuous socio-political conditions of post-Partition Sindh. By this time, Sindh had become a province of the nascent state of Pakistan. Karachi, formerly its capital, was redesignated as the capital of the new state. Simultaneously, Sindh absorbed a massive influx of refugees, or *Muhajirs*, numbering in the millions, who had fled from India. In the years that followed, the imposition of the One Unit scheme dealt a severe blow to Sindh’s integrity and autonomy, producing far-reaching consequences. Taken together, these developments

subjected Sindh to successive social, demographic, economic, and political crises. These upheavals left a deep imprint on the consciousness of Gadai Sahab, for whom the so-called independence soon lost its meaning when no qualitative transformation appeared in the life of the common person.

Abdul Karim Lashari (1901–1978), better known by his pen name “Gadai” (meaning “Beggar”) and popularly revered as Gadai Sahab, occupies a singular position in the constellation of Sindhi poets. A figure of multifaceted engagement, he functioned variously as a poet, journalist, writer, historian, activist, stage actor, and dramatist (190). Within Sindhi poetry, Gadai remains unrivalled in articulating themes of resistance and struggle. Only a small portion of his poetic corpus engages with romance; the dominant refrain of his post-Independence poetry is disenchantment. Consequently, nearly every verse outside this limited category is imbued with resistance. His magnum opus, taken as a whole, constitutes a sustained critique of oppression and a clarion call for change. Indeed, within Sindhi literature, no other poet apart from Gadai Sahab underscores with comparable intensity the necessity of resistance, committing himself so wholly and consistently to that cause.

م، دل انسان درد جڏهن سمايو
چڏيوسين وساري جانان عشق غم .

The poets of post-independence Sindh exhibited a pronounced inclination toward the production of politicized literature. In undertaking this task, they confronted multiple, layered challenges. The emergence of postcolonial literature of resistance was precipitated and sustained by a pervasive sense of frustration with postcolonial decadence. This bitterness found its most forceful articulation in poetry. Abdul Karim Gadai stands out among those poets who resented, through their unvarnished portrayal of post-Partition developments, what they perceived as a profound betrayal of trust. For Gadai, independence had been arduously won, yet it yielded no tangible transformation in social realities. Indigenous, power-hungry elites swiftly inherited and perpetuated the entrenched culture of domination. Political and economic policies bequeathed by the erstwhile colonizers were not merely retained but were systematized within the new state apparatus. Practices of patronage, crony governance, bribery, embezzlement, and thriving black markets became institutionalized, culminating in what may be described as *structural oppression*—a condition that has since blighted the lives of Pakistanis in general and Sindhis in particular.

As Ilhan Niaz argues, much like the former continental bureaucratic empires in which a small group of self-styled sovereign proprietors monopolized land and people alike, Pakistani society, following the British departure, reverted to a regressive culture of power shaped by centuries of warlordism, chaos, oppression, and despotism. For those who wielded authority in the newly independent state, power signified an exclusive prerogative that placed them above the law, enabling them to transgress with impunity (239–247). By the time Pakistan materialized as a political reality, the Muslim League had effectively become a gallery of reactionary landlords and *jagirdars* whose authority was deeply entrenched within their respective constituencies (Talbot 52–53). In the late 1940s, the *zamindars*, *waderas*, and *jagirdars* rallied behind the League, apprehensive of the Congress leadership’s explicit commitment to land reforms aimed at dismantling large estates. Moreover, as Adeel Khan observes, the Congress’s proclivity for mass mobilization posed a direct threat to Sindh’s entrenched elites (216–217). Sindh thus offers a stark illustration of how politics continued to function as a preserve of the privileged. The inherited pattern of accommodation and acclimatization of the landed gentry—instituted under the Mughals and sustained by the British—was carried forward into the postcolonial state (Svensson 12–40).

Maya Tudor further notes that Partition dramatically widened class cleavages: in West Punjab, 0.5 percent of the population owned 20 percent of the land, while in Sindh, 1 percent controlled 30 percent, and it was this class that monopolized power (174).

Landlordism permeated nearly every aspect of Sindh society, which remained fundamentally feudal and tribal in character. Alongside this, *pirdom* exercised considerable influence, combining spiritual authority with political power. Approximately 80 percent of land in Sindh was controlled by large landlords (Symonds 137). At the time of Partition, the landlord-tenant system prevailed across much of the province, with nearly 70 percent of agricultural land cultivated under sharecropping arrangements. A minuscule fraction—approximately 0.5 percent—of landlords maintained control over 25 to 30 percent of Pakistan's total cultivable land (Rahman 118–119).

The colonial ethos, reinforced by the circumvention of procedural norms and the flagrant violation of democratic values within and beyond the Muslim League, enabled ambitious bureaucrats to assume a dominant role in the nascent state. This was soon followed by the military's entry into the power structure. Thus emerged the troika of *Seigneurs* (feudal lords), *Mandarins* (bureaucrats), and *Praetorians* (the military), forged through a marriage of convenience. This triumvirate steadily eroded the social fabric of Sindh, a process whose consequences are now firmly embedded in history.

The subjugation of Sindh was executed through both top-down strategies at the state level and bottom-up mechanisms mediated by local intermediaries. As Naseer Memon contends, *jagirdars* pushed Sindh into a condition akin to servitude; acting in collusion with imperial interests, they stifled the growth of Sindh national consciousness in order to retain unrestricted access to the province's resources (11). In a fierce repudiation of this oppressive matrix, Gadai devoted his creative energies to dismantling the spurious myth of freedom. The present analysis, therefore, situates his poetry against the backdrop of key post-independence developments in Sindh, through which the various strands of resistance discourse that Gadai sought to articulate will be examined.

آزادي، حورِ ۾ وطن آندي تي خون جي اسان
کي سرماڻيدارن مليا جا ان سڀ انعام مگر!

هتي؟ ئي اها ڇا اخوت، و مساوات مسلماني،
کي سنگهارن پنهنجي جو ڪون ٿو ملي لولو سڙيو!

Translation:

On our blood was achieved the independence,
But capitalists reap its fruit!

Was it Islam, equality and Muslim fraternity that
Not a burnt slice of bread is available to masses?

Born into a peasant family, Gadai Sahab shared an intimate and experiential understanding of the sufferings of the Sindh *haris*. He remained acutely sensitive to the injustices inflicted upon them. In his poetry, Gadai foregrounded the deteriorating condition of the *haris* in the new state, and through the same verses, he launched a direct and uncompromising assault on the callous *waderas*. His poetic intervention laid bare the inherent contradictions of the landlord class. Indeed, Gadai's portrayal of the Sindh *wadera* exposes the most obnoxious and repellent aspects of this social formation. He subjected the institution of *jagirdari* to scathing ridicule, convinced that the figure of the *wadera* had descended upon Sindh society as a curse.

ٺاٺي نمرود هي وارو، ٻيٽ وڌي!
 حڪمراني اندر ڳوٺن جي جنهن هلي!
 ڪمائي سوني ۽ چشمو آ تي اکين!
 ماني ٿو کائي ۾ پاڇي جي بندوقن!

حضور جي سدا جي حاڪمن ڪري!
 پوري به ماني کي ڪڙيءَ ڪين ڏئي!
 مزوري محنت نه پورهيو، نه ڪو ڪري!
 چوري ۽ حلوا ۽ زردا کائي مگر!

نرالي آهي به هيٺ جي وڌيري!
 دونالي ۾ ڪلهن ۾، ڳچيءَ تمنچو!

Translation:

This, the landlord, with a belly bulging out
 Is like Nimrod!
 In villages does he wield the scepter!
 Wearing Eyeglasses with a golden temple,
 He eats his meal under the shadow of rifles!

All through the day, he curries favor with rulers!
 He does not let peasants even eat to their fill.
 He sits idle all along doing no work and no toil!
 But polishes off ambrosial and delicious foods such spicy rice, halwa, etc.
 Such a bizarre appearance a landlord makes,
 Carrying a pistol around his neck,
 And
 Lifting a rifle to his shoulders!

Land reforms, which were implemented in India shortly after Partition, were effectively rendered taboo in Pakistan. What kind of transformation could be expected in a polity where a small coterie of feudal lords monopolized land, the most fundamental natural resource, and exercised domination over the rest of the population? How could substantive democracy emerge from a landscape structured by fiefdoms? As Ayub Khan observed, such an extraordinarily skewed pattern of land distribution carried grave political implications in addition to its social and economic consequences. Under these conditions, democracy would encounter insurmountable obstacles in taking root; even where it existed nominally, it remained superficial so long as feudal powerbrokers commanded assured vote banks within their constituencies. Rural populations, held in thrall by *jagirdars* and *waderas*, constituted an electorate severely constrained by conditions akin to serfdom and were thus placed in a precarious position to exercise free electoral choice (106–107). Politics in Sindh, therefore, rested predictably on patron–client relations (Chawla and Riffat 5).

Sindhi peasants bore the brunt of unspeakable exploitation, which intensified sharply in the aftermath of independence (Hussain and Mohyuddin 28). The lives they endured scarcely qualified as substandard; rather, they were marked by relentless deprivation. Throughout the year, they were subjected to backbreaking labour, yet at the time of harvest they were compelled to look imploringly toward absentee landlords residing in urban centres for their subsistence (Jatoi 29). The depth of their subjugation was such that *waderas* violated their daughters and sisters with impunity, leaving the victims entirely powerless. Gadai repeatedly questioned whether this was the *Azadi* so loudly proclaimed. If so, what meaning did it hold for the ordinary individual who stood on the brink of catastrophe at the birth of the new state? Instead of improvement, life deteriorated further, descending from bad to worse in the Islamic Republic that had pledged to move heaven and earth to ensure a dignified existence for its citizens (Talpur 21).

Before long, the veneer of *Masawat-e-Islami* (Islamic equality) began to erode. Illusions of Pakistan as a realm of unqualified bliss rapidly dissipated, and confidence in the Muslim League's leadership, particularly in Sindh, steadily evaporated. Enduring legacies of power-centric politics, extreme wealth disparities, the tendency to treat the state as personal property, and the systematic alienation of large segments of the population drained whatever residual trust remained in state institutions. Ultimately, the dreams and hopes invested in independence stood ruthlessly shattered.

Gadai cried:

آزادي حور ۾ چمن آئي، سان انداز عجب
آيو تار تار دامن و چاڪ گريبان گل هڪ هر جو!

بربادي، جي گهر سون ڪيئي تي واعدن رنگين رڳو
آيو اعتبار کي اسان تي دلاسن دلبن فقط!

ڪي ماڻهن خاص ميسر سڀ، راحت و عيش ۽ خوشي
آيو قرار ڪو آهي نه ڪي، هاريءَ و مزدور مگر! ⁱⁱⁱ

Translation:

In such a strange way has come the independence
That everyone rends their vests and tears their chadors!
Having been fallen for the rosy promises did we ruin our garden!
The empty words did we rely on!
Happiness and comforts of life to a select few!
To a peasant and a laborer has been given naught!

Commenting on the paradox of freedom, Gadai himself observes:

“Shortly after Partition, we were jolted out of our reverie as our ideal of freedom turned out to be a mere pipe dream. We, the Sindhis, became strangers in our own homeland. Our ambitions and hopes were dashed. Ever since, Sindhi poetry has expressed itself in a new dimension—the existing one.” (Sindhi 56).

ڙي ساڳيا پي اڃا پنهور ۽ پڪڙا!
ڙي ساڳيا پي اڃا وهنوار ويڙهيچن! ^{iv}

Translation:

Alas! The jhuggis and its mortals are still the same!

Alas! The plight of the wretched is still the same!

The precipitous decline of once-prosperous Sindh, from affluence to deprivation, caught the world unawares. According to a joint report by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, *Pakistan: Securing Sindh's Future—The Prospects and Challenges Ahead* (2006), Sindh, at the time of Pakistan's creation, was approximately 50 percent wealthier than the other provinces (Qureshi 202; Ahmed 213). Even under British rule, Sindh maintained a sustainable economy in which prosperity and wealth prevailed (S. P. Chhablani, as cited in Jami Chandio 155–56).

آزادي مفهوم هو جي بيماريون ۽ فاڪا ڏڪر،
 ۷باقي؟ جهان چو ڪلائي خاطر، آزادي پوءِ ته

Translation:

If famines, starvations and epidemics were the definition of Azadi,
 Why did you make a laughing stock of us in front of the world?

Jami Chandio argues that, haunted by the anxieties of the period when Sindh formed part of the Bombay Presidency, Sindhi Muslims voted for Pakistan in the hope of securing a better future. Their experience of political and economic marginalization vis-à-vis Hindus during the Bombay Presidency had been deeply embittering, and they therefore seized every opportunity to support those who promised provincial autonomy and the freedom to manage their own resources through the creation of Pakistan. However, the Pakistan that ultimately emerged—centralized, bureaucratic, autocratic, and theocratic—bore little resemblance to what had been promised (160–167). G. M. Syed, in *A Nation in Chains*, underscores this argument by noting that the common people of Sindh were assured that their support for Pakistan would yield an independent and sovereign state within their own province, along with emancipation from the real or perceived economic domination of Hindus (4).

اڃ ٿو پڇان ڪان تربت جي "مشرق شاعر" سان ادب
 ۷سلطاني؟ ته ڏس واري جمهور سندي تو آ ڪٿي

Translation:

Taking liberty I ask the Poet of the East [Allama Iqbal] at his grave,
 Where is your sovereignty of the people?

Internal colonialism refers to the tendency to reproduce or sustain colonial structures within a nation-state, whereby domination is exercised by one class or region over another. In the context of Pakistan, as described by Dr. Qaisar Abbas, it denotes the establishment of a distinct governing mechanism through which colonial legacies inherited from the British were maintained, enabling the central authority to assert hegemony over peripheral regions. Within this framework, weaker and smaller provinces are effectively subjected to domination through an enduring alliance among the landed aristocracy, bureaucracy, and military establishment. As a result, these provinces are not only deprived of their economic resources but are also marginalized culturally, socially, and educationally, placing their collective identity under constant strain. Thus, internal colonialism extends beyond economic and political subjugation, as it also erodes cultural and civilizational foundations.

Following its inception, Pakistan increasingly evolved into a highly centralized and unitary state, diverging sharply from the spirit of the Lahore Resolution. Ibrahim Joyo observes that the national resources and cultural assets of smaller regions were systematically overshadowed under a continuous regime of majority rule, reinforced by the military dominance of what was portrayed as the “elder

brother” province (185). Similarly, Allah Bux Soomro had earlier cautioned that Sindh, within Pakistan’s political structure, would remain subordinated to Punjabi bureaucracy and military authority (Khan 218). On the refugee question, Sindh was again positioned as a sacrificial host, compelled to absorb millions of migrants arriving from India (Joyo 67–68; Memon and Khokhar 11–18; Syed, “Dayar-e-Dil”, 235–237). In the first year after Partition, approximately 1,167,000 Muhajirs entered Sindh, while nearly 943,000 Sindhis were displaced and forced to leave their homeland (Memon and Khokhar 11). The Government of Sindh, under Khuhro’s leadership, formally appealed to the Central Government to resettle incoming migrants elsewhere, arguing that the number already accommodated in Sindh far exceeded the population that had departed. However, this request was dismissed and framed as an expression of provincialism. Consequently, the indigenous Sindhi population soon found itself numerically overshadowed within its own province.

Between 1947 and the early 1950s, Sindh also experienced a continuous influx of migrants, many of whom were transported from Lahore and resettled in urban centres across the province. In total, around 3 million migrants are reported to have arrived and settled in Sindh during this period (Syed, “Dayar”, 243). Historical accounts suggest that Sindh had remained largely free of communal violence prior to this demographic transformation, which was attributed to the arrival of groups described as more politically and religiously polarized. The previously relatively peaceful and religiously tolerant social fabric was subsequently disrupted, giving way to rising tensions and episodes of unrest (Memon and Khokhar 12; Joyo 154).

According to Naseer Memon and Akhtiyar Khokhar, at the time of Partition, Karachi’s total population stood at approximately 450,000, of which Sindhi speakers constituted 61.2 percent, while non-Sindhi (Urdu-Hindi speaking) residents made up only 6.3 percent. However, this demographic balance shifted dramatically in the following years, with the proportion of Sindhis declining to a mere 8.6 percent, while non-Sindhis (Muhajirs) increased sharply to 55 percent (25–26). This transformation marked a profound and destabilizing demographic reversal for the Sindhi population.

Theodore Wright, in his article in *Comparative Politics*, argues that the anomaly of Sindh as a relatively developed province was so severe that its indigenous population risked being reduced to a condition comparable to that of Native Americans in the United States (301).

Sindhi, as a language, possesses a literary and cultural history spanning several millennia. Unlike several other regional languages spoken within Pakistan, Sindhi has long been supported by a well-developed script and an established literary tradition. However, this historically significant language came under sustained pressure shortly after Partition. It is often argued that even Bengali Hindus did not exhibit the same degree of rejection toward Urdu as that with which newly arrived populations tended to dismiss Sindhi. In Karachi, the Municipal Advisory Committee formally declared Urdu as the official language of the city (Memon and Khokhar 14). Subsequently, the University of Karachi removed Sindhi as a subject from its examination framework. School curricula were also structured in a manner that left Sindhi students with little choice but to abandon their mother tongue in favour of Urdu and English (Syed, quoted by Joyo 69).

Abdul Karim Gadai expressed deep anguish over what he perceived as a deliberate erosion of Sindhi language and identity by external actors. For him, Sindhi constituted the nucleus of the Indus civilization and embodied a divinely sanctioned linguistic tradition destined for continuity. He regarded it as the repository of Sindh’s cultural heritage and argued that any assault on the language amounted to an

attack on the Sindhi people themselves and their civilizational existence. In his view, this process placed the very identity of the Sindhi nation in jeopardy, a reality he found intolerable. The intensity of his reaction is captured in his profound emotional distress:

ڪولي اک مون پهرين ۾ جنهن!
 جهولي جي جيچل ڀري پيار!
 لولي ٿي ڏني ماءُ ۾ جنهن!
 گولي چوڙيئي تي ٻوليءَ ان!
 للڪار ڪئي تو تي لوليءَ!^{vii}

I opened my eyes in the lap of my mother
 Who lullabied me with the cradlesongs in the honeyed language!
 Thou, O outsider, opened fire on that language!
 Thou assailed my mother tongue, Sindhi!

Another instance of deviation from the foundational principles on which Pakistan was established was the decision to separate Karachi from Sindh and designate it as the capital of Pakistan, despite clear opposition and in direct contravention of resolutions passed by the Sindh Assembly (Ahmed 78–79; Tudor 178; Naz 6–7). On 2 February 1948, the Provincial Assembly of Sindh unanimously adopted a resolution opposing the proposed federalization of Karachi by the Government of Pakistan (Sayeed 269). In the aftermath of a severe refugee crisis, Sindh itself found itself further disadvantaged, effectively being transformed into a “refugee of its own circumstances” through the Centre’s unilateral appropriation of Karachi (Niaz 65).

G. M. Syed (“The Betrayal”, 68) writes:

“Sindh was subjected to systematic deprivation across geographical, economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. The profound loss resulting from the removal of Karachi and its surrounding areas is irreversible. Under compulsion, Sindh was forced to vacate its formal assembly buildings and relocate to makeshift barracks, which it had to render usable at its own expense. Most painfully, even for these temporary structures, it was obliged to pay rent to the Government of Pakistan.”

The One Unit scheme represents one of the most controversial episodes in the post-colonial political history of Pakistan. It was an artificial constitutional arrangement designed to dilute Bengali numerical strength and influence by constructing a formal parity between East and West Pakistan. However, beyond this stated rationale, it also functioned as a mechanism of political consolidation through which Sindh was effectively subordinated. The One Unit framework, in practice, became a vehicle for central domination under a Punjab-dominated federal structure.

Under this arrangement, Sindh experienced extensive extraction and centralization of its resources, while political rights were systematically curtailed and dissenting voices suppressed. In this sense, the province was reduced to a primary source of revenue and wealth for external control, often metaphorically treated as a “goose that lays golden eggs” for others. Its land, water, natural resources such as gas and oil, as well as its fiscal revenues, were transferred outward and rhetorically justified as being obtained “by the grace of my Lord” (*Hadha min fadli Rabbi*), reflecting the ideological framing of resource appropriation. This extractive logic is further reflected in Ajmal Khattak’s speech, where he remarks:

“Presently, Sindh is a hen that gives golden eggs, and it gives these eggs daily. That’s why people from across the country esp. Punjab head towards it to take these eggs [resources]” (Qureshi 201).

Arshad notes that during the One Unit period, Sindhi intellectuals came under intense pressure and surveillance (6). Censorship reached unprecedented levels, and systematic efforts were made to restrict freedom of expression and silence dissent. Sindhi literary production entered a period of constraint, with creative expression significantly curtailed under conditions of fear. Despite these pressures, writers such as Shaikh Ayaz, Abdul Karim Gadai, Hyder Bux Jatoui, Tanvir, and Shamsheer continued their literary and intellectual work, sustaining, in symbolic terms, a sense of cultural continuity and resistance.

The following snapshot outlines key developments that occurred after the enforcement of the One Unit scheme, illustrating the manner in which Sindh was progressively marginalised under its framework:

- Large tracts of agricultural land, brought under cultivation through the newly constructed and costly Kotri Barrage, were allocated to ex-servicemen, military officials, and bureaucrats, predominantly from outside Sindh (Qureshi 203; Khuhro 33).
- Similarly, land made cultivable through the Guddu Barrage was distributed in perpetuity to retired and serving military personnel and bureaucrats originating primarily from Punjab and other regions. In addition, populations displaced by the construction of the Tarbela and Mangla dams were resettled in these areas. Local Sindhi peasants, who had inhabited these lands for generations, were forcibly evicted. Extensive areas in and around Hyderabad, Badin, Sanghar, and Mirpurkhas were also appropriated from local communities and transferred to non-local settlers (Khuhro 33–34).
- Sindh's water resources were increasingly diverted and commercialized. New dam projects, undertaken largely without consideration of Sindh's ecological interests, facilitated the redirection of Indus waters to other regions (Qureshi 204). The Indus Waters Treaty was also concluded without adequate representation from Sindh, contributing to long-term economic, social, ecological, and cultural disruption (Ansari 41).
- Key administrative and institutional positions of strategic importance to Sindh were occupied by officials from Punjab and other provinces, thereby weakening local control over governance and decision-making structures (Qureshi 204–234).
- The provincial economy was significantly undermined, with major institutions such as WAPDA functioning in ways that disproportionately favoured Punjab's economic interests (Qureshi 204).
- More than 2 million acres of land left behind by Hindu inhabitants were redistributed to non-local groups, further altering land ownership patterns and reinforcing external settlement (Syed 243).
- The migrant communities settled in Sindh were, in many cases, less accommodating toward the indigenous population, while many displaced Sindhis were highly educated. Their forced displacement has been described as comparable to an amputation of the Sindhi political and social body (Alavi 97).
- Public infrastructure, including hospitals, roads, markets, railway stations, schools, and colleges, which had long carried Sindhi names, was systematically renamed.
- Language policy interventions created conditions that severely constrained the survival of the Sindhi language, with critics arguing that such measures contributed to its marginalisation and potential endangerment. These efforts have been interpreted as part of a broader pattern of cultural erosion (Syed 243).

- Illegal domiciles were reportedly issued to non-Sindhi residents, altering demographic and electoral balances (Qureshi 254).
- Elements of the local landed elite were co-opted into administrative and political roles, functioning as intermediaries who facilitated central control in exchange for personal advantage (Syed 243).
- Overall, Sindh was increasingly structured and governed in a manner consistent with colonial patterns of domination (Syed 377–378).

نشاني، جي ڪفر آغلاي، جي غير هي
زندگاني، جي ذلت ڪٽيندڙو، ڀلا ڪيسين
ولوڙيو، رت پنهنجو اڃ لئي، وطن آزاديءَ
ٿوڙيو بند جو يونٽ مروڙيو، جو ظلم هٿ! ^{viii}

Living in the One Unit under the domination of outsiders

Is tantamount to kufr (disbelief)!

How long will you rot in disgrace?

Give your blood for the liberty of you Sindh!

Strike a blow against the imperial power, Strike at the root of One Unit!

“Islam and Pakistan” functioned as a frequently invoked ideological slogan through which political rhetoric was deployed to justify the marginalisation and exploitation of smaller and weaker regions. Gadai remained critically aware of the instrumentalization of religion as a legitimising framework for extra-constitutional state practices. He recognized that in a socio-cultural context such as Sindh, where uncritical reverence for self-styled pirs and mullas was deeply entrenched, populations were more vulnerable to such ideological manipulation.

In his poetic critique, Gadai exposed what he perceived as the complicity of local elites in alignment with the “Samraj” (colonial powers), whom he held responsible for the systematic disruption of Sindh’s social and political fabric. As noted earlier, his intellectual and literary resistance extended beyond opposition to external domination; it also challenged indigenous structures of authority, including the entrenched influence of mullas, pirs, and mirs.

ٿيا، قبضا جا ڌارين تي ڪيئن تنهنجي
ٿيا، دوکا توسان جي اسلام نالي
ملن، ۽ ڦريو وڌيرن پيرن، توکي
وطن پيارا سنڌ چمن، جا سک منهنجي! ^{ix}

Translation:

Thy fields were colonized!

In the garb of Islam were thee looted!

Pirs, Waderas and Mullahs devoured thee alike!

My beloved Sindh!

Conclusion:

Azadi remained a deferred aspiration even after the departure of the British colonial administration. In its aftermath, the state became increasingly marked by patterns of concentrated power and institutional abuse. An entrenched alliance gradually consolidated among the landed aristocracy (Seigneurs), the bureaucracy (Mandarins), and the military establishment (Praetorians), collectively shaping the direction

of the state. These undemocratic forces retained effective control over political authority, thereby constraining the process of democratization and reinforcing cycles of extraction and inequality.

Within this broader configuration, Sindh emerged as one of the most adversely affected regions in both the Partition era and the early formation of the new state. A province that had previously demonstrated relative economic self-sufficiency was increasingly subjected to resource depletion, to the extent that securing even basic subsistence became precarious for large segments of its population. The province thus reached a critical historical nadir.

In this context, Sindh confronted what was perceived as a dual structure of domination: on one hand, centralizing state apparatuses, and on the other, entrenched local power holders such as waderas and sardars. It was during this period that Sindhi poetry assumed a significant role as a vehicle of resistance. Abdul Karim Gadai articulated sustained dissent against prevailing political and social structures, transforming his disillusionment with post-independence realities into a form of intellectual and poetic resistance. He emerged as a voice for peasants and workers, with his verses acquiring the character of resistance literature. In this sense, poetry functioned as a symbolic instrument of struggle, where the pen assumed a role analogous to that of a sword during a turbulent historical moment.

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ⁱ Gadai, Abdul Karim. *Laat Barandi Rahay: Shayari Jo Kuliyaat*, edited by Niaz Sarki and Javed Saghar. Roshni Publications, 2007, 217.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 185-7

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 72.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 384

^v *Ibid.*, 75

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 224

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 293

^{viii} *Ibid.*, 389

^x Ibid., 312.