



A Specter Is Haunting Pakistan! Nationalism in Pakistan's Horror Pulp Fiction

Urdu digests have a long history in Pakistan, and their contents include detective tales, science fiction, and love stories. The horror genre—found for example in magazines such as *Khaufnak Digest*, *Sacci Kahani*, or *Dar Digest*—is particularly intriguing, as the fantastic and the uncanny yield a canvas for stereotypes and ideologies. Horror stories are one way to represent what is evil in a society, as well as indicating which heroes are capable of countering these threatening influences. This article analyzes recent Urdu horror stories as they are found in the monthly magazine *Dar Digest* and reveals how these tales contribute to the villainization of Hindus in today's Pakistan.

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The 2010s have seen an increased interest in the distribution and impact of so-called “hate material” (*nafrat angez mavādd*) in Pakistan and India’s governmental education systems (cf. Nayyar and Salim 2005; Saigol 2005; Lall 2008; Flaten 2012; Kumar 2002).¹ Understanding this as the seed of mistrust planted into the minds of future generations, scholars and activists have unanimously criticized such mutual vilification as a major hindrance to the curbing of tension between the two nations. Following the despicable attacks on an army school in Peshawar in December 2014, the Pakistani government has stressed a crackdown on hate speech and the open slander of religious communities. Notwithstanding such efforts, however, within certain parts of Pakistan’s society an implicit—or explicit—defamation of the non-(Sunni) Islam is conspicuous.

In the following pages I will focus on a hitherto overlooked field, the genre of Urdu horror stories, examining in particular the trope of “the Hindu” as it appears in the magazine *Ḍar Ḍā’ijast*.² This monthly publication is inexpensively available all over Pakistan and with its relatively wide dissemination—around ten thousand to eleven thousand copies are sold per month—its content is not merely of marginal interest.³ As I will show, many of the tales featuring Hindu characters carry an ideological baggage that, similar to ideological strains identified by scholars studying the content of schoolbooks, consolidates anti-Hindu and anti-India resentment. Pulp fiction, of course, is not comparable to an official curriculum; its influence should not be overestimated. I consider such cultural articulations, however, crucial to investigate what Mohammad Waseem once called the strong consensus between the political decision-makers and public opinion when it comes to an anti-India mentality (Waseem 2002). To analyze the vast field of embedded stereotypes, political scientists and scholars of Pakistan studies must also pay heed to the important contribution of vernacular popular culture and its role in solidifying ethnic, religious, sectarian, and other stereotypes.

The field of horror

Horror texts are a fertile ground for the analysis of stereotypes and the dissemination of ideology. The genre-characteristic transgression of the everyday/ordinary linked to the bifurcation of good and evil promises creative ways of engaging with forms of “the other.” That is to say, horror stories are one way to represent what is evil in

a society and who the heroes are that are capable of countering these threatening influences. Horror texts also connect different temporalities, as they provide a platform where the archaic and the modern collide (Gelder 2002, 3). This also holds true for the Urdu horror genre, where ancient black magic frequently infiltrates the everyday of Muslim society.

In stories that feature Hindus and Muslims as protagonists, the aforementioned allocation of good and evil is straightforward. While evil Hindus plan world domination, sacrifice young virgins for gaining immortality, or simply terrorize others for no obvious reason, their Muslim counterparts emerge as noble saviors and wise father figures, righteously guarding their religious brethren and the rest of the world from the claws of Hindu spiritual imperialism. This threatening Hindu power usually derives from vicious and ruthless black magic, which requires blood-curdling ritual objects such as owls with twisted necks, human hearts, or the blood of several virgins.

For that reason, the genre is well suited for representing something that in cultural theory has come to be called “the other,” or, in psychoanalytical terms, “the abject.” It is this outside, which is both constitutive of and threatening to the very foundation of Pakistan’s society, that finds its way into the short stories of *Dar Digest*.⁴

Narrative and nation

Dar Digest is based in Karachi and has a circulation of around ten thousand to eleven thousand copies per month. The magazine has been published for seventeen consecutive years, and its staff consists of seven regular employees.⁵ Most of the journal’s contributors, however, are freelance writers from all over the country, and many do not get paid for their work. According to one of its editors, Hindu protagonists do not regularly feature in *Dar Digest*’s tales, and the publishers are careful that their contributors abstain from targeting other religions.⁶ Recently the magazine has expanded, and the editorial board now also publishes a women’s magazine called *Saima*.

But what is the relation between a nation state and pulp fiction short stories sold at bazars, bus stops, and train stations? Stuart Hall suggests an answer to this in his seminal work on cultural productions, where he analyzes the nexus of cultural identities and political movements (1992). For him a nation needs a variety of platforms where its history, its position among other nations, and its future trajectory can be represented. In other words, the nation is not simply a steady geopolitical entity but rather a system of cultural representations that is continuously performed in various ways (ibid., 292). Hall suggests a few tropes that are particularly important for narrating a nation, such as foundational myths, the invention of traditions, and a people’s continuity (ibid., 294). This list does not claim to be exhaustive, and many more mediators might come to mind. Crucial for the present study, however, is Hall’s emphasis on literature and popular culture, which, according to him, “provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for, or *represent*, the shared experiences . . .” (ibid., 293, italics in original). Any kind of cultural “articulation” (Grossberg 1986) that conjures up an imagined community (Anderson 2006) is, thus, part of how central ideas about the

nation are *described* and simultaneously *prescribed*. It is within this concatenation of texts and images that specific characteristics solidify over time and start to form an almost naturalized axis of a people. Lurid tales are no exception in this regard. The readership encounters repeated demonization of Hindus (and India), which gradually supports the formation of a popular opinion and—to tentatively come back to Waseem’s question—creates a link between the public and political decision-makers through a shared enemy.

National identity

To disentangle the ideological content found in *Dar Digest*, one needs to analyze the crossroads of nationalism, stereotyping, and psychoanalytical approaches to the uncanny. In the following I will briefly look at discourses of expulsion of “the Hindu” in today’s Pakistan followed by an introduction to three genre-characteristic stories. After the presentation of my empirical material, I will link this to the logic of stereotyping and its connection to the uncanny.

The complex link between Pakistani citizenship and Hindu identity has its roots in the two-nation theory (*do qaumī naẓariyah*), later accentuated in the ideology of Pakistan (*naẓariyah-i pākistān*). The Islamic Republic’s central founding myth (in the sense of how it was mentioned by Hall) claims that Muslims and Hindus are two distinct nations that can only thrive through their separation, which ultimately led to the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947. This movement for Pakistan (*tahrīk-i pākistān*), however, was not as straightforward a development as is often portrayed today (cf. Jalal 1995; Talbot 2012; Shaikh 2009). In spite of the complexities behind the events that led to the Partition, the simplified notion of the incommensurability of Muslims and Hindus is widely disseminated in India and Pakistan and often serves as a retroactive explanation for the separation of the subcontinent. A citizenship built on this notion of the two disconnected nations forcefully hyphenates “nation” and “state” under a hegemonic religious signifier. Nation state identity in Pakistan, for example, evolved according to an ideology that equates being Pakistani with being Muslim. This development required the exclusion of some for the unity of many.

One platform where the strategic expulsion of Hindus becomes conspicuous is the production of schoolbooks. As already mentioned, national and international scholars working on education in South Asia have criticized Pakistani schoolbooks for spreading stereotypes about India and “the Hindu” as threats to the Pakistani nation state (cf. Aziz 1993; Lall 2008; Rahman 2011). Since textbooks frequently emphasize that Pakistan is a Muslim nation, this threat to the country semantically shifts to become a hazard for a shared Muslim identity.⁷ “The Hindu” is, therefore, not only a danger to national security but “has always been an enemy of Islam.”⁸ In addition, references to India such as “Bharat is the country of non-Muslims”⁹ intentionally omit the existence of millions of Muslims living in India.¹⁰

Many stories in the monthly *Dar Digest* seem to echo this expulsion. Frequently benign tales carry similar messages under their vulgar content that, in the end, repeat the incommensurability of Hindus and Muslims by anxiously retelling the story of the misguided but also demonic Hindu. To elaborate on this point looking at a

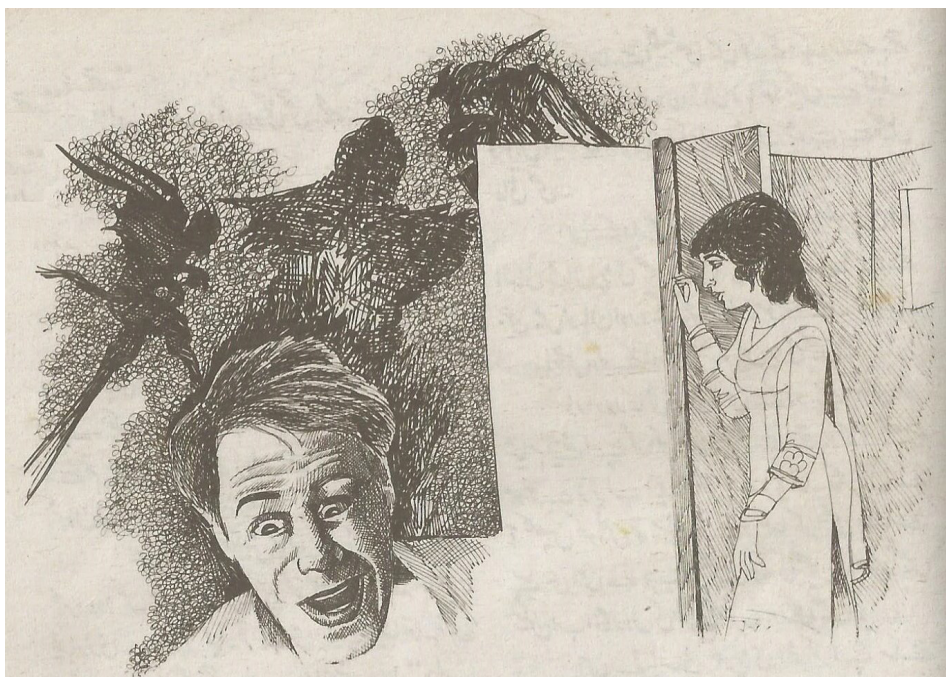


Figure 1. Illustration of the story *Duśmanī*. Source: “*Duśmanī*” (Hostility), *Ḍar Ḍā’ijast*, May 2014.

few stories that, in my opinion, feature genre-typical representations of “the Hindu” will be useful.

Duśmanī (Hostility)

We enter the story in the midst of a demonic ritual, with a human body laid out on a table, naked and with an open chest, the heart still pounding through the wound (see figure 1). Dr. Shankar, who is responsible for this fiendish scene, is satisfied with the heart and complements Nirmala, his “lady assistant” and his other henchmen for their work (Śaikh 2014, 131). The heart is put into a jar and then brought to a tantric, Ram Lal Das, who is also pleased about the quality of the organ (*ibid.*, 133). It is the eleventh heart that Dr. Shankar has cut out of unnamed male victims, and we learn that he and his team of scheming surgeons have now completed their contract with Ram Lal Das. As payment for this bloody agreement Ram Das gives Dr. Shankar a mantra, which will supply the superstitious doctor with the power to control other peoples’ minds. Though his lady assistant is skeptical—a quality, we learn, is inherent in the female character—the mantra really works, and Dr. Shankar is able to enter the mind of a young fellow who sits with his friend in a restaurant (*ibid.*, 134f.). Instigating turbulence between the two, which ultimately ends in a physical fight between the friends, Dr. Shankar has proven the efficacy of the magic words given to him by Ram Lal Das. Pleased, Dr. Shankar now reveals his evil plan to his lady assistant Nirmala, who, as we will learn, is not only professionally excited about the doctor’s evil abilities. After Dr. Shankar makes sure that his simpleminded lady assistant knows what aliens are, he explains that with the help of the mantra acquired from Ram Lal

Das, he will create an army of man-machines with the power to fight the space aliens (ibid., 137). With the support of the Indian government he intends to shoot a rocket into the cosmos for the sake of finding and killing them all (ibid., 138). Dr. Shankar's victory over the aliens would ensure him the power to rule space—thus putting America and Russia's astronautic ambitions in their place. Furthermore, Dr. Shankar plans to use his galactic supremacy to help India to become the new superpower on the globe. Nirmala, who is very impressed by the doctor, nonetheless inquires if his plan might not be a bit too ambitious, which prompts Dr. Shankar to sneer at religion and the concept of God, whom he deems as a mere human creation (ibid.).

In the next scene the story jumps to Dr. Shankar's last preparations for the space launch. Having acquired twenty men with the help of Ram Das's evil mantra, he transformed them into man-machines with the ability to breathe outside of Earth's atmosphere. At this point Dr. Shankar is completely convinced of his imminent success. Suddenly the door to his demonic laboratory, where he works with his sinister entourage, bursts open and a white-clad figure with a long beard enters the room.

“Stop, Dr. Shankar!” A deep manly voice appeared. Dr. Shankar, Nirmala, and Mohan turned around. An old man with a radiant face and a white beard stood at the laboratory's entrance door. He was wearing a long white dress and had prayer beads in his hand. (ibid., 139)

We learn that this is Baba Abdulla, a pious Muslim man, who has witnessed the scene in the restaurant and after that decided to kill the evil mind-controlling Dr. Shankar and his servants. But Baba Abdulla has not come alone. He brought a gang of ghosts with him—all from pious descent, as he mentions (ibid., 140). A fight emerges in which the sinful bunch—Dr. Shankar, his lady assistant, and their helpers—are ultimately killed by the pious spirits. Baba Abdulla saves the captured and mutilated men, who, as we learn, come from Muslim, Christian, and Hindu backgrounds. After their release Abdulla brings them to the next bus stop from where they return to their respective hometowns.

Duśmanī, published in *Dar Digest* (May issue, 2014), is a characteristic, yet simultaneously unique example of how Hindus feature in Urdu horror tales in Pakistan. The story uses a wide set of genre-typical tropes including power-hungry Hindu villains, black magic, and pious Muslim saviors. *Duśmanī*, however, also occupies a special position as it blends pulp science-fiction with tantric rituals.

Embodied in the figure of Dr. Shankar—the megalomaniac, atheist super villain—we find the quintessential image of the untrustworthy and simply evil Hindu. In *Duśmanī* this also extends to India as a nation as it is the silent supporter of Dr. Shankar's insidious plan, facilitating the mad scientist's rocket launch. In exchange for this support Dr. Shankar promises to turn India into a global superpower, even surpassing Russia and the United States (ibid., 138). India, thus, emerges as a cunning nation, which is conniving with an evil scientist and a tantric to gain world domination.

In the end of the story, Baba Abdulla—a *deus ex machina* figure—averts this conspiracy and saves the world. Sporting a long white beard and a *jubbah*, a knee-length formal dress, Baba Abdulla also carries a string of prayer beads (*tasbīḥ*), which marks him as a praying Muslim. At one point he describes himself as obedient to

the laws of God and hence responsible for eradicating oppression (ibid., 139).¹¹ With his character another stereotype enters the story—this time in the role of a pious Muslim. Baba Abdulla also controls spirits, but the story quickly reassures the reader that these are pious ghosts (*nek jinn*)—strictly in opposition to the black magic of the Hindu villain. The story, thus, doesn't deny magic *in toto* but rather shows how the pious jinns under the command of Abdulla are able to dominate Dr. Shankar's black magic (ibid., 140).

Duśmanī's main conflict emerges as nothing less than a struggle of good against evil: black magic gained from the brutal murder of the innocent and executed by an atheist (yet Hindu) doctor versus an army of pious spirits under the command of a saintly figure. These structures abound within the genre, and—with few exceptions—can be seen as the main characteristic of stories that feature Hindu characters. As the following examples will demonstrate, many of these tales feature an unbridgeable chasm between Muslims and Hindus, which often can only be resolved by the Hindu character's death or conversion.

Kālā Mandir (The Black Temple)

The story *Kālā Mandir* opens in a black Hindu temple in the outskirts of Calcutta (see figure 2). Sadhu Maharaj, the temple's religious authority, is surrounded by his followers and graciously receives a group of Hindu villagers who come to talk to him. The men have brought a girl with them, named Lilavati, who suffers from occasional fits. The girl's father assumes that this is the work of an evil spirit (*is par kisī bhūt kā sāyah ho gayā hai*) and so has come to ask for Maharaj's help (Śāhīn 2012, 84). The Sadhu's magical powers force the spirit inside the girl to explain herself,



Figure 2. The illustration of *Kālā Mandir*. Source: *Kālā Mandir (The Black Temple)*, *Ḍar Ḍā'ijast*, September 2012.

and we learn that it is not just any demonic being but Bhageshvari, a powerful witch, who, incidentally, served the same spiritual master as Sadhu Maharaj. When Sadhu Maharaj enquires about the witch's reasons for capturing the body of an innocent girl, Bhageshvari says that she will reveal her scheme under the condition that Lilavati's family members shall be unable to hear it. With a hand gesture Sadhu Maharaj deafens Lilavati's family and so Bhageshvari confesses her true intentions: she wants to decapitate Lilavati, scoop out her brain, and then carve a drinking bowl out of the girl's skull. Bhageshvari intends to use this skull as a vessel from which she will drink the blood of ten virgins whom she plans to sacrifice over a period of one hundred days (*ibid.*, 85). After this horrendous ritual, she explains, the bloody virgin cocktail will turn into *amrit jal*—a drink with the power to make Bhageshvari immortal. Sadhu Maharaj is intrigued by this scheme and strikes a deal with the evil witch: he promises to let her go and Bhageshvari vows to share the *amrit jal* with him. The two agree, and after giving Lilavati's family their hearing abilities back Sadhu Maharaj informs them that the girl would only be able to stay alive and secure from the influence of the evil witch if she lived within the confines of the temple. The villagers are shocked but subsequently agree and hand the girl over to Sadhu Maharaj.

In the next scene the reader is introduced to Lilavati's cousin (*cacāzād*), Mahindra, who is engaged to the afflicted Lilavati.¹² After the incident in the temple, Mahindra tells his college friend Akmal, a Muslim, about the cancelled wedding plans and that his fiancé now lives with the Sadhu. Akmal is suspicious about the whole story and suggests that Mahindra consults a Muslim saint, named Amal Baba. Mahindra agrees and visits the *pīr*. Amal Baba immediately sees through the pretext and reveals to Mahindra that the evil Sadhu Maharaj has captured his fiancé to gain immortality. Mahindra is appalled and requests that Amal Baba help him. The saint wants to support him but explains that without converting to Islam, Mahindra will be powerless to help.

“Look son, without becoming Muslim you won't be able to do anything. . . . Lilavati has nine more days to live. You need to act as soon as possible,” Babaji explained. Mahindra thought for a bit and then said: “Ok. I am ready to become Muslim.” “Mashallah! You have taken the right decision. May God help you,” Babaji said. (*ibid.*, 88)

Mahindra converts and Amal Baba instructs him in the ablution, the forms of prayer, and explains parts of the Quran. Mahindra takes on the Muslim name Mohammad Arslan and memorizes a few Quranic verses (*āyāts*), which should help him in his struggle against the evil Sadhu. Amal Baba, furthermore, gives Mahindra a dagger engraved with parts of the Quran.

Armed with these magical items and the power of the Quranic *āyāts*, Arslan sets out toward the temple to confront his fiancé's sadistic kidnapper. Due to his magic powers, the Maharaj is already informed about Arslan's coming and sends his servants to intercept him. Along his way, for example, a beautiful young girl tries to seduce Arslan. But when he rejects her seductive attempts, the girl reveals herself to be a nasty witch. Arslan quickly destroys the creature by blowing *āyāts* on her. Further down his path Arslan reaches a canal blocking his way, but instead of carrying water

the stream is of blood. Suddenly a group of midgets (*baunā*) emerge from the bloody stream and throw scorpions at Arslan. The young Muslim easily fights them off by reciting the Quran. The bloody stream also disappears after Arslan blows some verses on a clod of earth and throws it into the river.

After a long and arduous journey in which he endures earthquakes and fights off Hindu priests and massive bats, Arslan reaches the temple, where he encounters the evil Maharaj. The cruel Sadhu shows him a cage in which Lilavati is kept and swears that Arslan will never get his Lilavati back. In this moment the witch Bhageshvari attacks. But Arslan throws Amal Baba's dagger on which verses are inscribed at her and kills the evil creature. Immediately after that Arslan dashes to the Kali statue that has pride of place in the temple. He rips off the trident (*triśūl*) and stabs the Maharaj. The evil Sadhu staggers and falls on to the Kali statue, which shatters on the floor. After that Arslan takes his Lilavati out of the cage and they leave the temple.

Kālā Mandir was published in *Dar Digest* in the September issue of 2012. The tale about Lilavati and her fiancé Mahindra features many of the reoccurring topoi that form the basic foundation of this genre. Most importantly, the story ends in an epic struggle of "good Muslims vs. evil Hindus," which mixes physical strength with religious elements. Similar to other tales, Islam emerges out of this battle as the superior religion.

The characters in *Kālā Mandir* mirror genre-typical analogies: The evil villain is a power-hungry Hindu, who engages with black magic for his own gain. Lilavati's naïve family and her fiancé are deluded and not able to see through the wicked scheme. Only due to the help of Mahindra's friend, Akmal, is some doubt cast upon the situation, and it is subsequently a Muslim saint, Amal Baba, who uncovers the truth and saves the day. At first, however, Mahindra needs to embrace Islam "without which he will not be able to do anything" (*ibid.*, 88). The saint then gives the young man what only Islam can provide to overcome the tantric and his evil spawn. The hierarchical roles in this part of the story lack subtlety and clearly produce a chasm between the two traditions. While evil emanates from one of the two religions, safety and salvation spring from the other. The two do not collaborate—in order to gain the Islamic power to save his fiancé, the boy needs to become Muslim himself.

From here onward the two religions, embodied in the evil Sadhu Maharaj and the newly converted Arslan, oppose each other in a physical and metaphysical showdown. While the Hindu Sadhu recites mantras to command witches (*ibid.*, 90), scorpion-throwing dwarfs (*ibid.*), and horrible ghosts (*ibid.*, 92), Mohammad Arslan simply quotes Quranic *āyāts*, which immediately thwart each and every wicked attack. In this encounter Islam and Hinduism are reduced to their respective holy words and texts, represented by mantras on the one side and parts of the Quran on the other. The words do not represent theological debate and reasoning but rather lead to a clash of brute power. In this battle between mantras and Quranic *āyāts* (spoken or inscribed) the Islamic side of the battle prevails, and the holy Hindu words are silenced.

In summary one could say that allocation of power within *Kālā Mandir*—and many other such stories—is straightforward and unsurprising. Hindus are a superstitious and naïve folk who are fooled by their evil clergyman, while Muslims emerge as rational and helping characters who often do not even believe in the existence of witches and ghosts.¹³ Mahindra, the Hindu boy, is not able to challenge the Sadhu to

save his fiancé. It is only as Mohammad Arslan, the young convert, that he has the power to overthrow the tantric and his evil kin. The story ends with the shattering of the black Kali statue inside the (equally black) temple, another awkward reference in a long list of simplistic metaphors.

Saccī Pukār (The Genuine Call)

Akash Malhotra is a nineteen-year-old Hindu boy who lives with his seventeen-year-old sister Mala and his father Raj somewhere in India (see figure 3). The siblings' mother eloped to marry another man when the children were twelve and fourteen. Since then their father alone takes care of the two.

Mala is good friends with Sunbal, a Muslim girl, who is exceptionally fashion conscious. Sunbal wears pink, red, and green extensions in her hair, a massive amount of bangles on her arms and, on this day, is dressed in a short top with a skeleton printed on it (Ramṣān 2012, 240f.). When the two friends incidentally start talking about religion, Sunbal mentions that she is from a modern background with little interest in religion.¹⁴ Mala, too, admits that she never visits temples to worship God.



Figure 3. Illustration of *Saccī Pukār*. Source: *Saccī Pukār* (The Genuine Call), *Ḍar Ḍā'ijast*, September 2012.

One day Sunbal and Mala decide to go and see the Taj Mahal. Sunbal drives the car and the two girls keep chatting and gossiping the whole way. At one point, when Sunbal talks about her cousin who has mastered the art of dressing fashionably and even surpasses the style of the singer Madonna, the young woman gets so excited that she loses control of the car. The vehicle slides off the edge of a cliff and in this moment both girls reach out to God for help. Sunbal cries “Oh Allah!” and Mala yells out “Save me, oh Krishna!” (ibid., 242).

The next scene takes the reader into a hospital. There a doctor informs Raj and Akash that 40 percent of Mala’s body has been burned in the accident and that they were forced to amputate both of Mala’s legs and arms (ibid., 243). When Mala regains consciousness, Akash and Raj Malhotra go to see her. As soon as Mala wakes up, she asks about her friend Sunbal, and learns from Akash that Sunbal is completely well and merely suffered a minor bone fracture. The door on her side of the car had opened right when the car fell off the cliff and so Sunbal was saved from the flames, while Mala was severely injured. Akash tries to calm his sister by explaining to her that Sunbal’s karma was simply good, while Mala’s was bad. Mala refuses to accept this explanation and tells Akash that she is convinced that it was Sunbal’s God who had saved her friend.

A few days later Akash visits Mala in the hospital. During their talk Mala reveals to Akash that she is convinced that Sunbal’s deity has more power than their own.¹⁵ Mala tells Akash how, when the accident happened, both called out for help and how both girls wished the same thing from their respective divinities. Sunbal’s wish was granted while Mala’s desire to be saved was denied. She continues, exclaiming that although Sunbal was not a practicing Muslim and never went to the mosque, her God had saved her, while Mala’s had abandoned the young Hindu woman (ibid., 244).

That night Akash stays with Mala in her hospital room and performs a puja. Mala is annoyed with her brother and tells him to stop, because she has lost her faith. At one point, however, Mala asks her brother for a favor and forces him to promise not to tell their father. Akash agrees and Mala confesses that she wants to convert to Islam because she had become convinced of the power of Sunbal’s God.

Yes, brother I want to become Muslim. I started to like Sunbal’s God. I started to believe . . . there is someone . . . who is inside me . . . who tells me that I should approach Islam . . . it spreads peace inside me . . . brother allow me to become Muslim . . . so that I can get salvation after death. (ibid., 247)

Mala feels as if she would die soon and so convinces Akash to reach out to Sunbal who should convert Mala to Islam the same night. Akash is confused and asks how Sunbal, a girl who doesn’t even practice her belief, should convert Mala to Islam. But Mala responds that this is exactly the thing that Akash can’t fathom: even though Sunbal did not practice her faith, her God still saved her. Finally, Akash agrees and starts to search for Sunbal. An evil witch, however, distracts him and lures him away from the hospital.

With Akash sidetracked, the witch now enters Mala’s room. The hideous creature tells Mala that she comes on the orders of Kalka, a powerful sadhu. On this very night, exactly seventeen years before, Kalka laid eyes on Mala, when her mother was on

the way to the hospital to give birth to her. Because the family car had broken down, Mala's mother needed to be carried the last part of the way. At that time the evil priest's gaze fell on Mala's mother and he chose the unborn child to be sacrificed after seventeen years to increase his powers. After revealing this awful truth, the horrific witch approaches and with her black magic sucks the life energy out of Mala's body (ibid., 248).

In the next scene the story takes the reader to the burning ground on the day when Mala's body is given over to the flames. Akash has to light the pyre, as his father Raj is too devastated by the death of his daughter to perform the ritual. After the ceremony, Akash spots a woman in the distance who seems familiar. When he approaches, he sees that it is Sunbal, Mala's friend, who has now completely given up on fashion and has become a pious Muslim woman, dressed in black attire and wearing a long black scarf on her head. Sunbal tells Akash that after the accident she stopped using mobile phones and started to go to the *al huda* center for her education. The accident changed her life, she says, and now Sunbal knows that her God is almighty and always listening (ibid., 249).

As Akash wants to leave, a voice coming from behind stops him—it is Professor Jallaludin, an expert in the wisdom of light (*nūrī 'ilm ke māhir*), who was traveling with Sunbal (ibid.). Professor Jallaludin offers to help Akash enquire into the death of his sister. He tells him that Kalka, the evil tantric, lives in Dharavi, one of the biggest slums in the country. But he also warns Akash about the difficulty of this endeavor. This task, however, does not frighten Akash and so he leaves to find Kalka.

In Dharavi it is difficult for Akash to find his way. Suddenly a voice inside him tells him to stop and drink water. Akash's thirst comes up at the very moment when he passes a small house. When he enters the hut to look for water, he sees an old man whose appearance fits Professor Jallaludin's description. So Akash picks up a trident from the ground and stabs the old man in the chest. Fortunately, it is really the evil Kalka, who then attacks Akash. An epic battle erupts between the two, but Akash is too weak and needs to flee the scene. Exhausted and confused, he sees a mosque in the distance and intuitively runs toward it (ibid., 251). Fearing for his life, Akash starts to recite parts of the Bhagavad Gita, which he once memorized. In this moment Kalka grabs Akash's throat from behind and starts strangling the boy. Akash, now completely defeated, falls down right in front of the mosque with Kalka's hands clutching around his neck. In his last moment, Akash has a vision of his sister Mala who beckons him to come closer (ibid., 252).

With his last pinch of strength, however, Akash manages to push his tortured body forward and he reaches out to touch the mosque's first step. At this moment a voice from deep within him emerges and out of his mouth he says the sacred words "*allah-o akbar*." Suddenly the grip on his throat loosens and Akash hears horrible screaming from behind. Kalka and his heinous servants perish on the spot.

The last scene takes the reader into a car where a woman is listening to music and chewing gum. It is Madhu Sharma, Akash's cousin. Madhu sees Akash sitting on the side of the road and, taken by surprise, stops the car. She greets Akash and tells him that his uncle, Akash's father, Raj, is very worried about his disappearance. When Madhu approaches and wants to take him with her, Akash only shakes his head and

says: “I am not Akash anymore; I am Mohammad Ali.” After this he turns his back to his cousin and starts the ablution while the call to prayer echoes in the background.

Saccī Pukār is in many ways exceptional among the stories analyzed. This extraordinariness pertains to both its writing style as well as the content conveyed. *Saccī Pukār* captivates the reader with a lively narrating technique which, at times, resembles visual montages known from South Asian soap operas.¹⁶ The author skillfully sustains an arc of suspense, and his use of Hindi and English words is well adapted to the respective sociocultural environments. Furthermore, the storyline surpasses other tales with its bold and dismissive portrayal of Hindu faith and “Western” practices. Overall *Saccī Pukār* is more refined than other material of this genre; this also means, however, that some narrative parts are straightforwardly cynical in their approach to religious pluralism.

Typical for the genre, *Saccī Pukār*'s main villain is an ascetic engaged in black magic. Kalka's reason to terrorize Mala and her brother is superficially introduced by the tantric's desire to increase his sorcery strength (*apnī śaktī baṛhāne ke li'e*; *ibid.*, 248) and so fits smoothly into the general trope of the power-hungry Hindu ascetic. Compared to Kalka's central role within the story, the reader learns little about the tantric. Only his residence in Dharavi, one of South Asia's largest slums in the heart of Mumbai, is mentioned. Such rudimentary descriptions suggest that the evil Hindu ascetic is a well-known trope for the readership, which makes a detailed introduction unnecessary. This, furthermore, supplies the readers with a mostly blank canvas onto which they can project their wildest fantasies.

Mala is undoubtedly the story's most tragic figure. Her mother left when she was twelve (*ibid.*, 238), and her father's pampering love left her obstinate and arrogant (*xūd sar*, *ibid.*, 241). Mala idealizes Sunbal, her fashion-conscious friend, who boasts about her family's modern ways of life and her disinterest in religion (*ibid.*). When Mala refuses to go to the temple and instead chooses to leave for a picnic with her friend Sunbal, the tragedy unfolds. Sunbal causes a horrible accident, and while the Muslim girl suffers minor damage, Mala ends up terribly injured. The story offers a clear explanation—Mala called out to the wrong God. Severely burnt and with her limbs amputated, the young woman's life has taken a tragic turn. *Saccī Pukār*, however, does not portray this crisis as a part of life's contingencies but rather as rooted in a seventeen-year-old girl's wrong faith. Bound to a bed and utterly immobile, Mala's last wish—the conversion to Islam—is also not granted to her. Afraid of what her father might say, she secretly begs her brother to help her. The evil Kalka, however, thwarts Mala's utmost desire and so the Hindu girl dies without any chance of salvation. Throughout the story Mala is a disempowered character whose paralyzed position in life becomes manifested by her tragic accident. Born to a loose woman and into the wrong religion, Mala is misled by the godless and Westernized Sunbal, abandoned by her easily distractible and naïve brother, and harmed by her rigid father, who would never allow her to embrace Islam.

Sunbal, on the other hand, emerges as purged and receives a second chance. Her character is the stereotype of a Westernized young Muslim woman, who is more interested in fashion than in Islamic salvation. Not just incidentally does the life-changing accident happen because Sunbal is distracted by her obsession with her

cousin's new fashion style. Also here the message is straightforward: the young woman's (Western) life choices have caused this disaster. The story's rejection of modern, agnostic, and Westernized women becomes even more obvious in the tale's second half. There we find a purged Sunbal who is—similar to her initial appearance—introduced through her way of dressing. Sunbal's punk-chic is gone and now we find her wearing a decent black dress with a scarf covering her head. She has stopped using mobile phones and visits the *al-huda* center for religious education.¹⁷ The story is not particularly subtle in opposing the two lifestyles: mobile phones—that is, a life separated from a regulating patriarchal gaze—and other Western ways of living lead to death and destruction on the one hand, and a God-abiding attitude toward life leads to eventual salvation on the other.

To further disentangle this storyline, we need to juxtapose the two female characters: Mala's narrative, on the one hand, implies that there is no hope for Hindu women to obtain salvation as long as they do not convert to Islam—a desire that is, however, thwarted by their (oppressive/naïve) menfolk. Sunbal, on the other hand, gets another chance. Even though she is, similarly to Mala, not interested in living in accordance with her religion, Sunbal's wrong decisions are forgiven and her genuine call (*saccī pukār*) is answered. The reason for this distinction stems from nothing else than Sunbal's Muslim identity.¹⁸ The Hindu girl Mala can't be saved because in the moment of crisis she cried out to the wrong deity.

The other main character is Akash. Similarly to *Kālā Mandir*, in *Saccī Pukār* a Hindu man's conversion to Islam is a crucial element within the narrative. While in the former tale Mahindra's conversion is essential to fight the evil Sadhu in the first place, in the latter, both Mala and Akash conclude after a series of unfortunate events that Islam must be the superior religion. So in *Saccī Pukār* we find another genre-typical trope: a young Hindu's realization that Islam is the better faith. One poignant example occurs toward the end of the story, when Akash flees the evil Kalka. Fearful, Akash begins reciting the verses of the Bhagavad Gīta, and it is precisely at this moment that the evil Sadhu's hands clutch around the boy's throat. Yet in the very instant that Akash touches the mosque's step and utters "*allah-o akbar*" in agony, the evil spell is lifted, and Kalka and his bloodthirsty servants perish on the spot (*ibid.*, 252).

The subsequent scene shifts to Akash's female cousin driving a car, listening to music, and chewing gum—characteristics that earlier have been associated with a pre-accident Sunbal. The paragraph starts with a song playing on the car's radio: "leave everything behind . . . come with me . . . over the horizon."¹⁹ The placement of the song is not merely coincidental but foreshadows Akash's conversion, which is introduced a few lines later. The song indicates Akash's break with his former life, his family, and, by extension, also his religious community. In the very last scene, Akash—now Mohammad Ali—turns his back to his cousin and his father's worries and performs the ablution, ignoring his surroundings (*māḥaul se lā ta'aluq*, lit. "with disregard to the environment") while the call to prayer echoes in the background. Akash has left everything behind and has accepted the *saccī pukār*. The story ends with an unambiguous message for Hindus: Islam is the true voice inside you, leave everything behind and become a part of a new family.

To sum up, the material reviewed represents a set of recurring tropes characteristic of how “the Hindu” appears in stories published in *Dar Digest*. Certainly the most frequently encountered topos is the image of the evil ascetic/sadhu/yogi/tantric, whose black magic, often combined with a hunger for power, brings calamity to his environment. Stories such as *Jādū’ī ‘Amal* (September 2013), *Khvāb-e Parešām* (March 2015), *Lā Hāšil* (February 2012), *Mandir k̄ Hīšār* (February 2012), *Maut k̄ Qil’ah* (March 2015), *Maut k̄ Saudā* (January 2015), *Muḥāfiẓ* (February 2015), *Mūrkh Pujārī* (September 2013), or *Raqṣ Janūn* (in *Khaufnāk Kahāniyām* 7, date unknown) fall under this broad category.²⁰ Other stories may present the villain in the form of an evil Hindu woman/witch or even a Hindu goddess who is responsible for the tragedy that unfolds (cf. *Majlis-i Jinnāt*, November 2014; *Purāsrār Mandir*, January 2015; *Purāsrār Qaidī*, May 2014; *Āsībī Qil’ah*, November 2007). In both cases, however, the villains inflicting pain on the community are members of the Hindu faith. The victims of black magic—be they Muslims, Christians, or Hindus—are generally saved by a divine intervention (*Nāg Mankā*, May 2015), or a Muslim patriarchal authority, who embodies different kinds of religious stereotypes (cf. the tales already mentioned). While other stories might apply different lenses, such as the events at partition (*Khūnī Rāt*, February 2015), an epic battle in the ghost world (*Maut ke Ghāt*, January 2015), or an impossible romantic relationship (*Šadyūm kī Āg*, November 2014), an insurmountable difference between Hindus and Muslims is frequently the foundation of these horror tales. Another interesting point is that most of the stories that feature Hindu characters take place in India and not in Pakistan—a choice that emphasizes the “Hindu equals India” link and completely ignores the Islamic Republic’s significant Hindu minority. A historical analysis comprising the last seventeen years of *Dar Digest*’s existence would certainly unearth more elaborate ways in which Hindus are portrayed within this genre. The present sample of twenty-six tales scrutinized here, however, shows a one-sided engagement with the “Hindu other.”

Counter narratives

The aforementioned examples show how Hindus are frequently represented in the monthly *Dar Digest*. There are, however, notable exceptions, which must be mentioned here to provide a more comprehensive overview.

The first story, *Śaitānī Khel* (*The Demonic Game*) was published in *Dar Digest* in January 2011. The story develops around Vishal, a young Hindu man who returns to his ancestor’s abandoned estate. Soon Vishal notices that strange things happen on the house’s upper floor. Curious, he breaks into one of the locked rooms upstairs and unintentionally frees an evil witch who had been trapped there. Vishal falls under her spell and the reader learns that long ago the witch had killed his uncle. As punishment for her deed, the wicked creature became magically imprisoned in the upstairs room. With the help of Ramu (the family servant) and a Hindu priest, Vishal is saved and the evil witch is defeated once again.

The second story, *Rūpā*, is named after its main female protagonist. It was printed in one of *Dar Digest*’s attached volumes called *Khaufnāk Kahāniyām* (no. 6, date unknown), a series republishing chosen stories from older *Dar Digest* issues. In it Jagdish, a

young Hindu man, arrives at a huge estate where he is hired for a mysterious job. One night while wandering on the property he discovers a girl, named Rupa, who is imprisoned in a basement. Rupa reveals that she had been captive there for many years but instructs Jagdish to keep their meeting a secret from the landlord. After a few nocturnal visits, Jagdish falls in love with the girl and wants to marry her. Rupa now instructs him that he needs to steal the heart of a boa, which will make Jagdish rich and with the money the two would be able to elope. Jagdish snatches the magical item from the boa and brings it to Rupa, but when the girl receives the heart, she changes into a snake herself. A battle erupts in which Jagdish is killed.

With their simple storylines *Śaiṭānī Khel* and *Rūpā* do not engage in any condescending rhetoric about Hindus. The tales represent another class of stories featured in *Dar Digest*, those that do not hold to the rule of portraying Hindus as evil villains or misguided fools. That being said, these stories also do not feature any Muslim characters, a fact that avoids the Islam/Hinduism opposition discussed in this article and the clear tendency to exalt one side over the other.²¹

The last story to be dealt with here is called *Sakte kī Maut* (*Death's Swoon*), which appeared in *Dar Digest* in May 2015. The tale revolves around a Muslim police officer on his way to Patiala, a city in India. In the train he meets a Hindu man, Sakhdev, who tells him the following story: Shortly after getting married, his new wife, Pushpa, was cursed by an ascetic who came to their village. Pushpa died shortly thereafter and Sakhdev was required to perform the last rituals for her. When he cremated her body, however, the same ascetic who had cursed Pushpa appeared again and, after mumbling a few mantras, woke his wife up from the dead. After this incident the two lived together happily for many more years. The police officer does not believe Sakhdev's tale but later meets another man from Sakhdev's village who confirms the narrated events.

Sakte kī Maut refrains from generalized negative stereotyping about Hindus. The story does not feature sneering symbolic commentary about Hinduism to the extent that other stories do. The police officer and first-person "I" narrator, nevertheless, begins the tale with a disclaimer: he says that ascetics are able to put people into a death-like trance, which will make everyone believe that the bewitched has, in fact, died. Such ascetics, he goes on, also have the power to end this trance. With these introductory words—which only make sense after the story has already been read—the narrator shares his opinion that Hindu ascetics might have tricks to convince (naïve) people of their powers, but he also makes clear that he rejects their ability to actually rouse the dead. Another "experienced" (*jahām dīdah*) man from Sakhdev's village also confirms at the end of the story that the wife's apparent death was merely a trance. Even though the trope of the conniving and ambivalent Hindu ascetic is still present, and the Hindu characters appear as superstitious folk, *Sakte kī Maut* is one of only a few stories that feature both Hindus and Muslims without openly and crudely reproducing the aforementioned moral chasm between the two communities.

Stereotypes

At this point it will help to step back for a moment to briefly look at the function of stereotypes and "othering."²² Stereotypes are ambivalent. On the one hand they

claim to stand in for timeless truths, unsurprising and predictable, while on the other hand they constantly evolve in response to the passing of time and changes in space. This structural ambiguity makes stereotypes resilient and serves as one of the main foundations for their discriminative power (Bhabha 2004, 95). Being “undecidable” in their core is also a quality that stereotypes share with forms of the uncanny—a connection that I aim to elaborate on in the following paragraphs.

The politics of representation and its link to stereotyping or “othering” has become a prominent feature in studies of colonialism, orientalism, and the construction of group identities (Inden 1986; Said 1978; Salecl 1994). Building on critical theory, this vast textual body calls our attention to the inherent relations of power at work in processes of representation. While some scholars argue that there is no avoiding the representation/power conundrum (Laclau 2007), it is also true that certain representations are simply more violent than others. Pickering, for example, approaches this asymmetry by distinguishing between stereotypes and mere categories. While the latter are important to organize the world around us, the former are produced from—and produce—power relations with the ultimate aim to inscribe hierarchies. Categories, according to Pickering, are openly disputed and develop over time, whereas stereotypes are claimed to be naturalized qualities echoing through the centuries (2001, *passim*).

Generally, stereotypes are embedded in an implicit or—in the case of those stories analyzed in this article—explicit hierarchy, which allocates clear oppositions of rational/irrational, civilized/uncivilized, or good/evil. Such ascriptions are usually strategically placed and originate from a privileged position, such as colonial administrations, scholars, or media outlets, to name only a few. On both ends of the spectrum—romanticized or derogatory characterization—stereotypes utilize a non-historical and one-dimensional representation of otherwise multilayered identities. In short, stereotypes reject a group’s ability to change in time or move in space.

In many ways, such a reductionist depiction helps to consolidate one’s own faction through a common enemy. This makes the stereotype an important element in the study of political rhetoric and populism. Exclusion is constitutive for the excluding party for a variety of reasons, and stereotypes help to temporarily fix one’s own discursive location through the articulation of a non-ambivalent other. In this process, stereotypes do not only speak about an object but simultaneously offer an insight into the stereotyping part who produces them. As Titus has shown in his study of colonial perception of the tribes inhabiting the empire’s Northwest frontier, stereotypical content might shift swiftly together with a changing political climate. The backstabbing enemies of yesterday might become today’s noble savages (1998).

Here the stereotype reveals its ambivalent structure as one of its defining characteristics. The unambiguous, ahistorical, and constitutive “you” requires constant reification as it is threatened by the infiltration of new meaning. In an ever-changing world, “the immigrant” might at one point prove not to be lazy after all but rather form a significant base of a state’s economy. As stereotypes conjure allegedly naturalized images and metaphors—in other words lay claim to universal applicability—they require that one constantly maintains this fixity. This creates a stereotype’s paradoxical situation: on the one hand, it aims at depicting universal

truths, while on the other hand it must change constantly to adapt to its environment. This ambiguity leads to the stereotype's "anxious and assertive" character (Bhabha 2004, 101).

Much of this is applicable to how Hindus are portrayed in the stories dealt with here. The most obvious and *anxiously assertive* image is that of the evil Sadhu or tantric who poses a threat to Muslim society or, in fact, to the whole world. In these stories readers encounter the "eternal truth" of the Hindu villain, whose dangerous existence is presented periodically in *Dar Digest*.²³ Similar to the aforementioned problem of schoolbooks in Pakistan, so too in the horror genre we find an ever-threatening Hindu "other" in the form of the evil and mysterious ascetic, waiting for any opportunity to disturb Muslim society.

But there is more to these stories than the simple, straightforward trope of the corrupt ascetic. Under closer scrutiny the representation of "the Hindu" is paradoxical from its outset. Hindus are simultaneously powerful and evil as well as weak and innocuous. Both of these sets of attributes, however, position the characters at the fringes of society. They appear as potent antagonists but also as slapstick figures of incompetence, who require help from masculine Muslim father figures (such as Baba Abdulla, Amal Baba, or Prof. Jallaludin). At the end of these tales, the Hindu ambiguity and its symbolic overdetermination is resolved either through conversion (Akash, Mahindra) or death (Dr. Shankar, Sadhu Maharaj, Kalka). This fascination with ambiguous characters is overall a significant element for the horror genre, as we will see in the following, where I will link my analysis of stereotypes to forms of the uncanny.

The uncanny and object positions

Certainly one of the most famous investigations of the uncanny was done by Sigmund Freud, who first dealt with this topic in 1919. Written in Freud's typical clear style, the article approaches the uncanny from two perspectives: first with the etymology of the German term *unheimlich*, and later with the "persons, things, sensations, experiences and situations" (Freud 2009, 1) that, according to Freud, cause this elusive and eerie feeling. Both these approaches lead Freud to the conclusion that the uncanny has roots in the known and familiar. Without following the whole spectrum of his argumentation, where he deals with etymology and poetry, Freud ultimately assumes that the uncanny represents something familiar (*heimlich/heimisch*), which has been repressed and returns to haunt the mind. He, however, also admits that this is a statement that can't necessarily be turned around: not all that has been repressed is, thus, also uncanny. Nevertheless, Freud suggests a formula: the uncanny gains its "uncanniness" from a certain shift in the familiar, which tweaks it in such a way that the familiar turns eerie. According to Freud, this is etymologically supported with the prefix *un-* in *unheimlich*, and he writes that "*Das Unheimliche ist also auch in diesem Falle das ehemals Heimische, Altvertraute. Die Vorsilbe 'un' an diesem Worte ist aber die Marke der Verdrängung*" (Freud 2009, 267).²⁴

Jeff Collins, an art historian, provides a creative approach to this topic in his introduction to the work of Jacques Derrida. Collins aims to show how the uncanny

is located at the threshold between the known and the unknown, an idea he uses to explain deconstruction. For him, Derrida's deconstruction, in short, claims that "undecidability" is the foundation for binary opposition. The corruption of clear binaries and the subsequent undoing of foundations leaves a sense of unrest, which, according to Collins, is also found in many tropes linked to the horror genre. At one point he explains this horror of indeterminacy using the trope of the zombie:

Zombies are cinematic inscriptions of the failure of the "life/death" opposition. They show where classificatory order breaks down: they mark the limits of order. Like all undecidables, zombies infect the opposition grouped around them. (Collins 2005, 21)

In its role of being "undecidable," the zombie is not part of any symbolic order. According to Collins, however, in this disturbing function the zombie is simultaneously both fascinating and horrific. This indeterminacy and threat to the established order characterizes many parts of the classical horror genre and is found in figures such as ghosts, golems, vampires, or Frankenstein's monster.

To introduce a final perspective on the uncanny, I will examine the work of Julia Kristeva, who has meticulously analyzed the role of the ambivalent and its relation to the uncanny in her essay *Powers of Horror* (1982). Exploring the work of Freud, Lacan, and Douglas, Kristeva develops a distinctive approach to the genre through her concept of "the abject." Although a comprehensive reproduction of her theory is beyond the scope of this study, Kristeva generally also identified horror's relationship to the undecidable as the source of its attraction. Similarly, her abject is linked to ambiguity and symbolic overdetermination; it is "what disturbs identity, system, order" (ibid., 4). With respect to the overall theme of this article, I will focus on the parts of her argument that link the monstrous to forms of strategic and constitutive expulsion. This will offer a framework for the analysis of Pakistani horror stories, which abound with representations of "the evil Hindu." Furthermore, my reading of the abject will emphasize a temporal—or historical—relationship between the detesting and the detested entity, which aims to expand on what has already been said about stereotypes.²⁵

Kristeva's elusive abject is located somewhere at the border of the subject and the object. It is a metaphor for the in-between state of elements that once were a part of the subject but, due to contingent reasons, have been rejected and reside now in the undefined area between the two. The abject represents a former relationship, something that once had a connection to the subject, but has since turned into an alien object, void of the former association. This rather abstract notion is exemplified with Kristeva's most famous example of the corpse: it was at one point a living organism, a character with a certain place in society. After the event of death, however, this organism turns into a removed object, thwarting the former characteristics. The corpse symbolizes a "sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome" (ibid., 2).²⁶ For Kristeva this game of familiarity and repulsion lies at the heart of the horror genre's main appeal. The abject might also be constitutive of identity. Similar to the aforesaid about the relationship between

the stereotype and the stereotyping groups, the abject, too, produces a certain understanding of one's self—physical, social, or even cultural—by rejecting that which is considered intolerable. Creed writes that abjects (and horror) are a part of society, simply because “that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life” (2002, 65). In other words, the abject represents foundation and potential distortion of a social order.

The psychoanalytical category of the abject nevertheless requires a historical analysis. It is dangerous to uncritically transport Eurocentric theories, especially those that claim to speak in general terms about the working of the mind, to non-European contexts. Such endeavors, however, might also open up new potential for engagement. In this regard, I suggest what McClintock has called a “situated psychoanalysis” (McClintock 1995, 72), which aims at an interdependent approach between (material) history and psychoanalysis. This attempts to avoid ahistorical impositions of psychoanalytic concepts by producing a variety of possible applications of “the abject” in its respective discursive environment. Such a situated psychoanalysis might, for example, deal with abject *objects*, abject *states*, abject *zones*, and so on (ibid.).

In the case of the Urdu horror genre in Pakistan and its wealth of Hindu representations, the metaphor of the abject proves more insightful than a mere analysis of stereotyping. While stereotypes also reveal their constitutive character, the abject distinctly looks at forms of the uncanny and its relation to identity construction. Furthermore, it foregrounds a link to temporality, which points at a mystical or actual moment in time when a unity with a now-rejected part might have been established. Thus, the abject introduces a temporal layer, which exposes its former relationship to the rejecting group.

With respect to the Islamic Republic, the abject position of the evil Hindu represents a former relationship that has been rejected in many parts of today's society. Particularly after the 1965 and 1971 wars, Pakistan's connections with subcontinental Hindu India were cleansed from the national narrative (Kamran 2013, 116). Using platforms such as schoolbooks, a century-old shared history was either neglected or vilified ad nauseam as in the horror genre. Particularly within the context of Pakistan's constitutive ideology, which claims Islam as the *raison d'être* for the Republic, “the Hindu” takes on an abject *position*, on the one hand as a threatening enemy on the other side of the border, and on the other hand as defining the very foundation of the Islamic Republic. The Hindu's abject position in such stories, hence, is not only “anxious and assertive,” as in the case of the stereotype, but reveals an upsetting former close relationship that must under all circumstances be rejected. Pakistan's horror genre has proven to be a suitable stage for representing this ambivalent and frightening relationship of “the Hindu” to and with Pakistan's founding ideology.

Conclusion

Various forms of media, including TV programs, feature films, and literary texts, reflect notions of national citizenship. But these communicative channels also work

as performative cultural patterns, in that they not only describe but also prescribe what it means to be a part of a particular community. The representation of a nation's aspirations and ideals, on the one hand, as well as its taboos and adversaries, on the other, forms a discursive range within which concepts of citizenship are articulated and notions of subjectivity become solidified. In this article I explored one small part of Pakistan's popular culture—namely, the form of horror tales published in the magazine *Dar Digest*—to analyze the ways in which Hindu characters are represented there. As this article has shown, the image of Hindus (and India) as evil, unrighteous, and harmful to Muslim society is not a rare exception but rather proliferates widely in the analyzed stories. Furthermore, the monthly's wide and regular dissemination helps to create a certain public and, therefore, must also be considered as a source of the nation state's narrative. Without underestimating the readership's ability to distinguish real life from the content of such pulp fiction, it must still be noted that the exclusionary language repeatedly found within these stories contributes to an atmosphere of mistrust. *Dar Digest's* frequent depiction of the conniving Hindu (often on a monthly basis) might not directly link to particular incidents of violence against Pakistan's minorities, and many Hindus do celebrate their religion openly and in peace (Schaflechner 2018), but it nevertheless helps to create an environment in which the Islamic Republic's Hindu minority is vilified and alienated.

The striking regularity of Hindu characters appearing within the horror genre in Pakistan may, furthermore, be approached through a psychoanalytical lens. There the uncanny is described as being located on the threshold between familiarity and eeriness. This idea is further elaborated in Kristeva's notion of the abject, which reveals how abject tropes are threatening *and* constitutive to a social order. Defining this ambivalent position as one of the main appeals of the horror genre, it comes as no surprise that the evil Hindu features so prominently within the analyzed stories.

Lastly, the presented sample may also be illuminating for the field of political science. *Dar Digest* plays a part in unifying various publics with political institutions under an anti-Hindu/India rhetoric. To investigate this consensus between Pakistan's publics and the political decision-makers, as Mohammad Waseem has called it, scholars must devote increased attention to the role of popular culture. This vast area, often only accessible through local languages, must be considered by political scientists researching the area. This is particularly critical as this unification over and against the constitutive and threatening Hindu other comes at a price. As the last decades have shown it favors a bigoted society, which, ultimately, tends toward its self-destruction. While the heinous attacks on an army public school in Peshawar in 2014 have caused the government to take significant steps to curb the influence of hate speech within society (Kugelman and Ahmed 2015), the remaining antipathy toward Hindus, and other non-Muslims, must be tackled to counter metonymical shifts of hatred.

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NOTES

1. This article is a revised and expanded version of a piece originally published in the *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Südasiestudien*. See Schaflechner (2016).
2. Even though all twenty-six short stories introduced in this article are taken from *Ḍar Ḍā'ijast*, my sample also covered magazines such as *Khaufnāk Ḍā'ijast* and *Saccī Kahānī*, which yielded similar results.
3. Compared to Pakistan's huge population (est. 216million in 2019) this might seem like a negligible number. It has to be noted, however, that the biggest English newspaper in Pakistan, *The News*, has a circulation of only 120,000 copies per day (Shah 2010).
4. From here onward I will use the English transliteration for *Ḍar Ḍā'ijast* for the sake of practicality.
5. I am grateful to Sameer Mandhro, who recorded this interview with one of *Dar Digest*'s staff members in 2016.
6. For the year 2015, I counted at least eleven stories that featured Hindu protagonists in *Dar Digest*.
7. A class 2 Urdu textbook includes the following quote: "Our country is Pakistan. We live in our country. Pakistan is an Islamic country. Here Muslims live. Muslims believe in the unity of Allah. They do good deeds," cited in Nayyar and Salim (2005, 11). The 2002 national curriculum for English for class 11 and 12 reads, "To educate and train the future generations of Pakistan as a true practicing Muslim" (cited in *ibid.*, 11).
8. Urdu class 5, Punjab Textbook Board, Lahore 2002 (cited in *ibid.*, 20).
9. From an English textbook for class 3, as cited in Aziz (1993, 166).
10. I have discussed this in more detail in Schaflechner (2014).
11. *Maiṃ apne allah ke aḥkām kā pāband hūṃ aur isī kā ḥukm hai ki zulm ko miṭā do.*
12. While there is no definite rule for the Hindus in rural Pakistan, cousin marriage is usually rare, especially on the paternal side.
13. See here Akmal's response after Mahindra tells him Lilavati's story: "*Yār...! Yah cūrel, jinn bhūt. Mujhe to un par zarā bhar bhī yaqīn nahīṃ hai*" (Śāhīn 2012, 87). This tension of, on the one hand, rejecting the existence of supernatural beings such as ghosts or witches but, on the other hand, engaging in *nūrī* (white) magic to counter the evil attacks of tantric practitioners and their helpers is unresolved.
14. *Bha'ī ham log zarā māḍarn qism ke haiṃ - mazhab kī taraf kam hī haiṃ* (Ramṣān 2012, 241).

15. *Sunbal kā bhagvān hamāre bhagvān se zyādah t̄āqatvar hai nān* [sic] (ibid., 244).

16. Such as the shift in scenery, for example, at the end of the story when the reader is suddenly taken into Akash's cousin's car, or the way in which Mala's voice is featured the moment Akash flees the evil Kalka (ibid., 252).

17. Al-Huda is an international religious institution founded in 1994 in Pakistan, which focuses mainly on women's religious education. The organization gained brief international attention when it became known that Tashfeen Malik, one of the perpetrators of the 2015 San Bernadino shooting, studied in one of their seminars in Multan, Pakistan. See "Official Statement on California Shooting" 2012.

18. *sunbal bhī širf nām kī musalmān thī* (Ramšān 2012, 244).

19. *Sab tor t̄ānābānā . . . le nāl tujh ko jānā . . . āsmān se pare* (ibid., 252).

20. This does not mean that the trope of the fearsome ascetic is only found in Urdu horror stories in Pakistan. Quite the contrary, ascetics and their terrifying black magic also occur in similar lurid Hindi tales from India.

21. Compare also: *Mahān Ko'ī* (September 2013), *Mahangī Pyās* (May 2015), or *Cahalāvah* (January 2011).

22. Even though there are convincing arguments that claim a difference between stereotyping and othering (Pickering 2001, 71), at this point I conflate the two for the sake of comprehensibility.

23. As mentioned, this danger is appropriated for the respective environment. Dr. Shankar's evil world domination plans and his conspiring with India, for example, come soon after a time when India launched its first space probe to enter the orbit of Mars in November 2013 (*Duśmanī* was published in *Dar Digest*'s May 2014 issue). This is an example of stereotypes attuning to time and space.

24. "The *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, homelike, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression" (italics in original). See the translation by Strachey (Freud n.d., 15).

25. I consider this emphasis on a historical dimension necessary to reevaluate axiomatic systems of knowledge production such as psychoanalysis.

26. The corpse in the form of the body without a soul is a very common trope (Creed 2002). Think of zombies, vampires, and in our case Dr. Shankar's man-machines.

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