



**THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NASIM HIJAZI: HISTORICAL NOVELS AND NATIONAL PRIDE IN
URDU LITERATURE**

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Abstract

Nasim Hijazi, a pivotal figure in twentieth-century Urdu literature, is renowned for his historical novels that intertwine factual history with fictional storytelling, offering readers a captivating portrayal of the past while awakening national pride and purpose. His novels, such as *Dastan-e-Mujahid*, *Muhammad Bin Qasim*, and *Shaheen*, are set against the backdrop of the Pakistan Movement and serve as a tribute to the glorious past of Muslim civilization. Hijazi's writing not only highlights key historical events and figures but also seeks to inspire contemporary audiences by reminding them of their cultural legacy and encouraging a purposeful life. This article explores Hijazi's literary contributions, his unique writing style, and the impact of his works in shaping national consciousness, with a focus on the importance of history in literature and the role of fiction in preserving cultural identity.

Keywords: Nasim Hijazi, Urdu literature, historical novels, Pakistan Movement, Islamic history, national pride, literary legacy, historical fiction, cultural identity, literature and history.

Introduction

The twentieth century marked a significant turning point in Urdu literature, with the emergence of the novel as a widely popular genre. This period was not only characterized by social and political upheaval in India but also witnessed the rise of influential writers who sought to explore themes of nationalism, identity, and history. Among these writers, Nasim Hijazi stands out as one of the most prominent figures in the realm of historical novels. His literary contributions, especially in the context of the Pakistan Movement, have had a profound impact on Urdu literature.

Nasim Hijazi's novels are not merely works of fiction; they are an artistic portrayal of historical events and figures, designed to inspire and enlighten the readers about their cultural heritage. His works blend reality with romanticism, making history come alive in a way that is both engaging and instructive. With a deep passion for history, Hijazi's writing transcends mere storytelling, using his historical novels as tools to awaken national pride and instill a sense of purpose in his readers. His style, which incorporates carefully constructed plots, well-defined characters, and powerful dialogues, holds a unique place in Urdu literature, blending the art of novel writing with journalistic integrity.

This article explores the trajectory of Nasim Hijazi's literary career, examining the historical context of his works, the style and themes he employed, and the lasting impact of his novels on both the cultural and intellectual landscapes of Urdu literature. Through a detailed analysis of his major works, including *Dastan-e-Mujahid*, *Muhammad Bin Qasim*, and *Shaheen*, this article aims to highlight how Hijazi's literary contributions continue to resonate with readers and shape the understanding of Islamic history and national identity.

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Background

Nasim Hijazi, born in 1914 in the Gurdaspur district of India, emerged as one of the most significant and celebrated Urdu novelists of the twentieth century. His literary career began during a time of great political upheaval and social unrest, as India was grappling with the independence movement and facing internal divisions. The British Empire's colonial rule was at its zenith, and the period was marked by a heightened sense of nationalist sentiment, particularly in the Muslim community. Nasim Hijazi's work is rooted in the tumultuous historical and political environment of this era, particularly during the period leading up to the partition of India in 1947.

Hijazi's intellectual formation was deeply influenced by various leading figures, including Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Maulana Shibli Nomani, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal. He was particularly inspired by the revolutionary thoughts of Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar, whose speeches sparked Hijazi's desire to contribute to the national cause through literature. With a strong inclination towards reading, Nasim Hijazi was exposed to Western authors like Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo, and Leo Tolstoy, who expanded his literary imagination and helped shape his narrative style.

While initially attracted to the world of journalism, Hijazi's true passion lay in historical novel writing, which provided him with the platform to creatively explore and reflect on the glorious past of the Muslim world. His commitment to nationalistic ideals and his belief in the power of literature to shape the destiny of nations were central themes in his works. Hijazi was not only an accomplished novelist but also a historian, essayist, and columnist, which enabled him to weave historical accuracy with the literary flair of fiction.

In the early 1940s, Hijazi began writing novels that focused on the history of Muslim civilizations and their struggles, including works like *Dastan-e-Mujahid*, *Muhammad Bin Qasim*, and *Shaheen*. These works not only presented significant historical events and figures, such as the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad Bin Qasim, but also aimed to inspire contemporary readers by reminding them of their cultural legacy and the strength of their ancestors. Hijazi's works were deeply rooted in Islamic ideologies, highlighting the moral and spiritual values that, according to him, were essential for the success and advancement of the Muslim community.

Hijazi's work extended beyond the realm of literature into activism, especially during the Pakistan Movement. He was a key figure in promoting the idea of Pakistan and played a significant role in spreading awareness of the political and social realities of the time. His journalistic endeavors, particularly through the newspaper *Zamana*, reflected his unwavering commitment to the truth, often challenging the political climate of the time. After facing ideological differences with the press, he shifted his focus to Quetta, where he continued his advocacy for Pakistan's creation.

Through his historical novels, Hijazi sought to awaken national pride and provide a sense of direction to the people of the newly formed Pakistan. His

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writing style, which blended historical facts with imaginative storytelling, was designed to captivate and educate his audience, ensuring that the lessons of history were not lost on future generations. Hijazi's works continue to be celebrated for their portrayal of the Muslim world's history and for their role in inspiring a generation to reclaim their lost dignity and legacy.

In the Twentieth Century, the Novel Emerged as a Popular Literary Genre in Urdu Literature

In the twentieth century, the novel became a widely popular genre in Urdu literature. During this era, India was plagued by social and political instability. Selfishness and apathy among people were on the rise, and the British government had become politically stable, while the public was experiencing a state of unrest. This situation also caused unease among writers, prompting them to write on issues related to ethics and manners. Under the influence of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, prominent figures such as Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali, Shibli Nomani, Muhammad Hussain Azad, and Nazir Ahmad focused on the literary aspects of the reform movement.

Maulvi Karimuddin, in his writings, deviated from existing literary traditions and introduced realism. Sarshar took the social decay of Urdu society as his theme, while Mirza Ruswa portrayed life with artistic success.

Many novelists in Urdu tried their hand at historical writing. Among the early historical novelists, Abdul Haleem Sharar holds an important place. Through his historical novels, Sharar provided glimpses of a glorious past. His novels raised historical awareness among readers, presenting historical events in a novelistic form in a powerful and impactful manner. This approach increased readers' interest in historical topics. However, in terms of literary quality, some deficiencies are evident in his novels, particularly in character development and emotional narration, as more attention was given to plot construction. This is why there is a clear coherence and organization in the plots of his novels.

Muhammad Ali Khan Taqib, a contemporary of Sharar, also highlighted the prominent achievements of the ancestors in his novels, presenting them in a way that sparked enthusiasm and inspiration in the readers. From a technical perspective, his novels are historical, but the depiction of the era is not fully reflective of the times. It could be for this reason that his novels did not gain widespread popularity among the public, and now, very few readers of Urdu literature even remember the names of his novels.

Mohandas is also known for his contributions to historical novel writing. His historical novels, though closer to reality, are more symbolic in nature. In the writings of Allama Rashid Al-Khairi, historical events are not closely linked to romanticism. If the historical aspect were removed, the story would still remain engaging. Sadiq Hussain Sardhnavi is also an important name in the field of historical novels. His novels do not exhibit strong plot construction, as the story begins and ends in a rather flat manner. The elements of curiosity and immersion do not compel the reader to stay engaged, and although the

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characters possess noble qualities, the story lacks the depth that could connect readers.

During the period of India's partition, M. Aslam's historical novels portrayed the struggle between good and evil using artistic techniques, while at the same time, the novels were more dominated by a romantic atmosphere rather than a strictly historical one.

In Urdu literature, after Sharar, the figure who received significant acclaim for historical novel writing was Nasim Hijazi. Nasim Hijazi began his career as a novelist during the time of the Second World War, when the Indian independence movement was at its peak. While Abdul Haleem Sharar had initiated the trend of historical novel writing, and this trend continued thereafter, the enthusiasm and fervor in Hijazi's novels were not present in the earlier works. Dr. Nizhat Sami al-Zaman writes about Nasim Hijazi's style of writing, stating that:

"Nasim Hijazi's novels are different from Sharar's and all his imitators. The plots, characters, and dialogues in his novels are of a distinct style. There is a balance in Nasim Hijazi's work that is not found in the historical novels of his predecessors. He has carefully organized and structured the plots, and one can see the influence of Scott and Dumas in his work."

After Sharar, Nasim Hijazi (1914–1996) Became the Prominent Figure in Urdu Historical Novel Writing

Nasim Hijazi had a passion for reading from an early age, which is why his knowledge was vast. His works were deeply influenced by the intellectual writings of Maulana Shibli Nomani, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and Maulana Rumi. Inspired by the stirring speeches of Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar, he decided to start writing from his school days. During his time at Islamia College Lahore, on the advice of his respected teacher Sufi Muhammad Ashraf, he read authors such as Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo, Walter Scott, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, which enriched his intellectual growth.

Nasim Hijazi hailed from the Gurdaspur district, and his father wished for him to serve the nation by joining the military. However, Nasim Hijazi chose to dedicate his life to serving the nation through the power of the pen. In the twentieth century, Nasim Hijazi was not only a key member of the Pakistan Movement but also held a prominent position in journalism. He began his professional career with the Karachi-based daily Zamana. Despite governmental and temporary pressures, he wrote the truth, standing firm in his commitment to integrity.

Later, due to ideological differences, he parted ways with the newspaper and moved to Quetta, where he continued his struggle for the creation of Pakistan. He was aware that the British intended to maintain their influence over Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Russia through their presence in Balochistan. In the Constituent Assembly, he gained support for the creation of Pakistan through the representative of Balochistan and the members of the Royal Jirga, thus paving the way for Pakistan's independence.

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Here, he faced challenges not only from the opposition but also from a group of Muslims who supported the Congress, creating further difficulties for him. It was necessary at that time to inform not only Muslims but also the oppressed Hindu classes of the truth. Therefore, Nasim Hijazi sought to raise awareness among Muslims through not only his newspaper writings but also his novels. Already a recognized figure in Urdu journalism, he used the medium of novels to remind the Muslim community of their glorious past. This is why the journalistic influence is evident in Nasim Hijazi's novels.

Initially, he wrote the short story Shudra, which was published in Hikayat-e-Islam magazine in January 1936. His second short story was Jistajo. These early stories focused on the caste system and inequality in Hindu society. With the maturation of his ideas, he later presented Shudra as a larger narrative in the form of a novel titled Insan Aur Devta. A thorough examination of the condition of the Shudra class in India opens many avenues for reflection. On the surface, the novel Insan Aur Devta discusses the caste system in India, but in reality, it aims to highlight the primary reasons behind the Pakistan Movement and the challenges Muslims would face in undivided India.

Nasim Hijazi's first novel, Dastan-e-Mujahid, presents a young man from the Pakistan Movement who sacrifices his love and devotes himself to the true purpose of life. He began writing this novel in 1937, completing it in 1938. When it was time for publication, the publishers looked at the manuscript and remarked, "What era are you talking about? We only publish the works of progressive writers.

" Through the efforts of Mir Jafar Khan, the novel was finally published in 1943 from Quetta, allowing Hijazi's thoughts to reach the public.

In light of the goals of the Pakistan Movement, Nasim Hijazi wrote his novel Muhammad Bin Qasim, which was published in 1945. In the following three years, three more of his novels were published, all of which were deeply rooted in Islamic ideologies and purposes. These novels gained immense popularity among the public. Muhammad Bin Qasim not only draws attention to the conqueror of Sindh, but also features key historical figures such as Hajjaj bin Yusuf, Suleiman bin Abdul Malik, and Raja Dahir. These characters contribute to the historical authenticity of the narrative. In terms of characterization, in addition to the real historical figures, the fictional characters of Naheed and Zubair play an important role in keeping the readers engaged. Through these characters, the story is maintained in a compelling way. The way reality and fiction are intertwined makes the plot appear authentic and clear. Dr. Rashid Ahmed Goriccha, while praising Nasim Hijazi's writing style, writes:

"Through his dialogues, the uniqueness of the characters comes to the forefront. These dialogues align perfectly with the personality of the characters. He skillfully brings out the psychological and internal conflicts of the characters through these dialogues."

When Nasim Hijazi's novel Aakhri Chattan was published, it was the year

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1947—a pivotal period in the Pakistan Movement. In the chaos of this era, there was a dire need to maintain unity among the local people. Nasim Hijazi's writings played a significant role in achieving this objective. The manuscript of Aakhri Chattan was an important piece in this regard. The novel's central historical characters, including Hulagu Khan, Genghis Khan, and Jalal ad-Din Khwarazm Shah, are key figures in the novel's story of battles and struggles. Dr. Waqar Azim, commenting on the novel, further clarifies Nasim Hijazi's style:

"In terms of art and style, there is a blend of oratory and literary elegance. The events of the novel unfold gradually and, as they reach the climax, captivate the reader. The arrangement of words, sentences, and phrases is also appropriate. In some parts of the novel, the overwhelming flow of words carries the readers along. The dramatic structure of the narrative is generally smooth and consistent. There are occasional waves of propagandist sentiment, but the literary quality consistently reigns. The characters are well-defined, and their dialogues are concise, impactful, and avoid artificial depth. All of this is because the author has carefully considered the different aspects of the story and placed each element in its proper context."

Nasim Hijazi's writing style meets the artistic demands of literature. Not only from a literary perspective but also in the field of journalism, he introduced a modern approach to newspapers. Special attention was given to the makeup of the newspaper, which included the inclusion of bold and small headlines, pictures, cartoons, editorials, columns, and humorous articles, all of which contributed to making the newspaper more engaging. As a result, the circulation of the newspapers saw a remarkable increase. Nasim Hijazi was primarily a novelist. His entry into journalism was incidental. He started his journey in novel writing with the great story of the land of Hijaz, for which he required extensive knowledge and study. This novel is particularly significant, and according to Nasim Hijazi, he started writing it with a new pen bought in Beirut. He dipped this pen in the water of Zamzam. While performing the Umrah and praying under the Mi'zab-e-Rahmat during rainfall, he placed the pen under the Mi'zab-e-Rahmat, wishing that no mistake would occur while writing with this pen, so he could write the truth.

Nasim Hijazi remained active for the betterment of his country and people. He spoke the truth without fear or hesitation. Once, a landlord from Bahawalpur, who had a particular fondness for literature, arranged a gathering of writers at a hotel in Lahore, which included some progressive writers along with Nasim Hijazi. One progressive writer remarked to Nasim Hijazi:

"Your novels are becoming popular, but your hero seems like a supernatural figure, cutting through the enemy ranks like a knife through butter."

Nasim Hijazi, in a calm tone, asked, "Which of my novels are you referring to?" The writer replied, "I have read several of your novels." Nasim Hijazi insisted on knowing the name of the novel, and the writer felt deeply embarrassed for his falsehood.

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Nasim Hijazi's novel *Shaheen* tells the story of the rise and fall of Muslims. The Muslims ruled over Andalusia for almost eight hundred years, but internal biases led them to decline. Through this story, he wanted to convey to the present-day Muslims that the massacre of a million Muslims during the riots was not an accidental event. In the preface to this novel, he also advised that Pakistan should be made invincible. The history of our ancestors, in the form of the achievements of conquerors, is available to us, but capturing these events in a novel in an interesting and impactful way is no easy task for any writer. This requires not only extensive reading but also a broad imagination. Portraying an era that passed centuries ago, and weaving its culture and civilization into the narrative, is challenging because the author must be fully aware of both the external and internal conditions of that era in order to present them compellingly to the readers. In this regard, Nasim Hijazi's writing style can be considered artistically effective as he has beautifully crafted facts into a narrative where neither the plot shows any flaws nor does the reader's attention wane. The reader feels as though they are part of that era, witnessing the events and characters unfold before their eyes.

Nasim Hijazi's novels exhibit a clear structure and organization in their plots, characters, and environments. The characters are depicted with both their virtues and flaws, in accordance with the environment. Special attention is given to dialogue creation, as the dialogues not only clarify the characters but also enhance the atmosphere in a more influential way. The breadth of his imagination can be gauged from the fact that he presented the blurred outlines of the past with the vibrant colors of the present. History is often considered a dry subject, but to make it engaging, he skillfully incorporated romanticism, capturing the reader's attention. As Dr. Rashid Ahmed Goriccha writes:

"Compared to Sharar, Nasim Hijazi demonstrates a greater artistic sense in plot construction. Writing a story and weaving a historical event into it in such a way that history never feels detached from the story is a remarkable feature of Nasim Hijazi's plots. His novels pay particular attention to the arrangement and organization of events. He never writes anything that disrupts the flow of the story."

The Writer's Style and Its Impact

The writing style of any author reflects their intellectual perspective. Nasim Hijazi's writing style is unique, which contributed to his popularity among readers. On the surface, his writings exhibit a strong sense of religious commitment and nationalism, but a deeper analysis of his works reveals that his impactful style keeps the reader engaged until the end. Nasim Hijazi was not only a novelist but also a historian, researcher, essayist, and columnist. Therefore, he adapted his style to suit the subject matter. His novels reflect a narrative tone, with a simple language and a persuasive style. The stories are not overly complicated, and events are presented concisely or at length as needed, demonstrating his technical maturity. His writings were not imitations

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of others, which is why there is a strong element of spontaneity in his works. As for the didactic element in his writing, this approach only stands out when it becomes excessive and burdensome for the reader. However, the beauty of his novels lies in the fact that readers accept the advice and guidance he offers as part of the narrative, enjoying it without resistance. Nasim Hijazi used his novels to present the ups and downs of life. Including historical events in a novel requires technical and artistic expertise. Nasim Hijazi, with his mastery of technique, presented Islamic history in an engaging and impactful way through fiction. Just as Allama Iqbal attempted to awaken national pride through his poetry, Nasim Hijazi's heroes in his novels also encourage the nation to live a purposeful life. For this purpose, he adopted a narrative style that resonated with society. The interest generated by storytelling is inherently part of human nature, and it serves as an effective tool for social reform. Through this style, Nasim Hijazi encouraged the nation to regain its lost dignity by informing them about the achievements of their ancestors.

Conclusion

Nasim Hijazi's contributions to Urdu literature, particularly through his historical novels, have left an indelible mark on the cultural and intellectual landscape of the twentieth century. His works, deeply rooted in the historical, social, and political context of his time, not only provide a vivid portrayal of Muslim history but also offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by the Muslim community during the colonial era and the partition of India. Through novels such as *Dastan-e-Mujahid*, *Muhammad Bin Qasim*, *Shaheen*, and *Aakhri Chattan*, Hijazi successfully blended historical facts with the artistry of fiction, capturing the imagination of his readers while awakening a sense of national pride and purpose.

What sets Nasim Hijazi apart from his contemporaries is his ability to weave historical events and figures into compelling narratives that both educate and inspire. His writing, characterized by its clarity, simplicity, and emotional depth, continues to resonate with readers across generations. Hijazi's unique style—marked by a keen sense of balance between fact and fiction—has made his work timeless, with the ability to evoke a sense of nostalgia and pride in the reader for the achievements of the past.

Beyond his literary contributions, Nasim Hijazi's role in the Pakistan Movement and his commitment to using literature as a tool for social and political change further solidify his place in the history of Urdu literature. His work not only reflects the historical struggles of the Muslim community but also serves as a reminder of the importance of national unity, purpose, and identity. Through his novels, Hijazi sought to ensure that the lessons of the past were not forgotten, urging his readers to embrace the values and ideals that had once made their civilization great.

In conclusion, Nasim Hijazi's legacy as a novelist, historian, and activist remains pivotal in the landscape of Urdu literature. His historical novels,

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imbued with moral and spiritual lessons, continue to serve as a source of inspiration for readers, not only in Pakistan but across the world. Through his writings, Hijazi has not only preserved the history of Muslim civilization but also instilled a sense of pride and purpose in the hearts of his readers, ensuring that the past continues to illuminate the path for the future.

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