

MPhil in Art & Design (Art History)

**AN ANALYSIS OF ANWAR MAQSOOD'S
INFLUENCE ON SOCIO-POLITICAL COMEDY
GENRE IN PAKISTAN**

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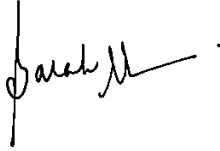
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CERTIFICATE

It is to hereby certify that the present research under the titled of “**An Analysis of Anwar Maqsood’s Influence on Socio-Political Comedy Genre in Pakistan**” is an original work done by Yasra Haider Rizvi as partial fulfilment of the requirement of the MPhil Art & Design (Art History) degree at the Postgraduate Research Centre of Creative Arts, College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore. I have personally gone through the raw data and certify the correctness and authenticity of all results reported herein. I further certify that the thesis data has not been used in part or full, in a manuscript already submitted or in the process of submission in partial fulfilment for the award of any other degree from any other institution or home or abroad. I also certify that the enclosed thesis has been prepared under my supervision and I endorse its evaluation for the award of MPhil degree through the official procedure of the university.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the overview of comedy and socio-political satire as influential mediums for social criticism and entertainment in Pakistan. The genre began to solidify after the partition of 1947, drawing from a deep-rooted tradition of clever wit found in ancient Indian folk stories and Sanskrit dramas. Pakistani comedy has frequently reflected and critiqued governmental actions, often satirizing social and political activities. This study delivers an overview of socio-political comedy genre in Pakistan, with specific focus on Anwar Maqsood's influence as a prominent contributor. Maqsood's fearless approach to addressing sensitive topics through humor has played a critical role in fostering critical thinking and raising social awareness among audiences. The study has also identified and addressed the gap in documenting Maqsood's work and his role in shaping socio-political satire in Pakistan. It examines his influence on the genre, particularly through his television shows such as *Fifty Fifty*, *Loose Talk*, and theater plays that established new standards for political and cultural commentary in Pakistan. The findings underscore Maqsood's transformative contributions to socio-political comedy, highlighting how his work not only entertained but also educated and provoked thoughts among masses. In short, his ability to blend wit with social critique has positioned him as a pioneer in Pakistani satire and his influence continues to shape the landscape of socio-political comedy in contemporary television and theater.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Comedy, a diverse genre plays a momentous role in human culture and society. It covers an extensive range of styles and techniques with an approach to engage audiences to eliciting laughter and serves as a mirror to society that reflect the challenges of everyday life for entertainment. It also highlights the irrationalities people face every day and turns frustrating situations into moments of laughter. Although, a slapstick or stand-up satire, comedy connects with our shared experiences, it is not just about jokes but reflects society, a genre that connects audience.

Comedy can be traced back to ancient civilizations as it was a vital element of theatrical performances. In ancient Greece, plays by writers like Aristophanes used humor to appraise politics, social standards and cultural practices. This practice has continued throughout eternities with medieval comedians and renaissance writers like Shakespeare who also contributed towards the rise of stand-up comedy.

Socio-political satire type of comedy uses witty criticism to address the faults in society, politics and cultural standard. It involves exaggeration, irony, and sarcasm to highpoint issues like corruption, democracy and social injustices. Unlike pure comedy, which primarily aims to entertain, socio-political satire has a deeper purpose to encourage change by making audiences ponder on serious topics in a humorous and insightful way. Socio-political comedy in Pakistan over a course of time has become a dynamic form of expression that employs sharp critiques of the political and social issues of the country, especially in a society where direct criticism can be challenging. In short satire provides a creative outlet to address corruption, governance, societal norms, and cultural contradictions. Several satirists since the birth of the country through television shows, stand-up comedy and theater plays have used comedy to reflect the life of Pakistanis by engaging audiences in meaningful discussions leading to laughter. Maqsood is among the few satirists who have helped in developing the socio-political genre in Pakistan to encounter the status quo of the country.

Several studies have explored the socio-political comedy in Pakistan, one such study titled, *Pakistani Theatre: A Unique Cultural Form of South Asia* addresses the tradition of Urdu theatre

in South Asia and how theatre emerged as a conventional form.¹ Another research explores; theaters in Pakistan, its creation, its potential role in national development and highlights the region's strong historical tradition of theater and also notes the significant challenges faced by the art sector after partition.² Whereas, in an article titled, *Influence of political satirical shows on youth's participation in democratic process*, written by Saqib Riaz, Bilal Muhammad, Bilal Muhammad and Nazir Farrukh talks about how political comedy shows have impacted the participation of the younger generation in the democratic progression and the connection between their perceptions of politics. This study has also explored if political involvement through comedy shows contribute positively towards political socialization.³ Similarly, other studies on the same genre include, *A Narrative Analysis of Political Satire on Pakistani Electronic Media*, *Exploring Public Perception about the Framing of Politicians in the Mirror of Comedy TV shows of Pakistan*, *Late-night comedy shows an impact on political opinion of Pakistani youth*, *Satire Shows Portrayed by Television and Political Education and Political Satire in Pakistan: An Evolution and Change* among others.

These past studies have mostly focused on the influence of socio-political satire shows, theater plays and stand-up comedy, whereas this study has traced the influence and contribution of Maqsood in the emergence and development of socio-political comedy genre in Pakistan. Predominantly, how his work laid the foundation for later shows in Pakistan. In chapter 2, comedy was discussed from a worldwide perspective, including its various types, theories comedians, comedy shows, old and new comedy while tracing the history of comedy from its origins in ancient Greece, Rome, China, Japan and Indian drama in South Asia along with the influences between different cultures and their impacts on one another. In chapter 3, the focus of the study was narrowed down to tracing the history of comedy in South Asia. In chapter 4, an overview of comedy in Pakistan was discussed by inspecting how socio-political changes have shaped narratives based on the experiences and perspectives of society that has defined Pakistani humor.

¹ Ahmad Bilal, "Pakistani Theatre: A Unique Cultural Form of South Asia," *South Asian Studies: A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (2018): 85–95, https://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/5_v33_1_18.

² Adil Aziz, Dr. Shazia Ismail Toor, and Niza Qureshi, "Cultural Resilience through Theater: An In-Depth Examination of Dramatic Narrative Communication in the Post-Partition Era," *Pakistan Journal of Social Research* 4, no. 2 (April 2022): 1320–27, <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v4i2.1333>.

³ Saqib Riaz, Nazir Farrukh, and Bilal Muhammad, "Influence of Political Satirical Shows on Youth's Participation in Democratic Process," *Global Media Journal Pakistan Edition* XI, no. 1 (January 2018), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372235397_influence_of_political_satirical_shows_on_youth's_participation_in_democratic_process.

In chapter 5, an overview of comedy and socio-political satire in Pakistan based on Maqsood's prominent work has been discussed which mostly includes TV shows and plays that have helped to expand the socio-political comedy genre in Pakistan. Whereas, in chapter 6 further work done by Maqsood related to socio-political comedy, encompassing his contributions including paintings, exhibitions, live shows, seminars, festivals and his roles as a host and a guest has been discussed. The last chapter, investigates theater productions, stage plays and TV programs which were based on the socio-political comedy other than Maqsood's work since 1947. In conclusion, Maqsood work has not only entertained but also educated and provoked thought, creating a rich legacy that continues to influence today's socio-political satire television shows and theater plays.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF COMEDY

Comedy, an ancient form of entertainment, represents a genre of literature and fiction employing sarcasm to elaborate and critique various situations. Rooted in ancient theatrical traditions, comedy has undergone diverse transformations, aiming to evoke humor and provoke laughter. The study of comedy involves analyzing its impact on social standards, values, and conflicts. Comedic works serve as a lens through which scholars explore how wit engages with or highlights social ideologies, power dynamics, and the broader realm of entertainment. As defined by Aristotle, “Comedy deals with the private affairs of mundane life, treating historical characters and events.”⁴ It distinguishes between tragic and comic stories, allowing comedy artists to recognize the contradiction in humans as social beings, with societal norms. They celebrate creative energy and physical vitality, highlighting the joy and perseverance of life. The broad definition of comedy encapsulates various strategies to make people laugh.⁵ It is a lens to explore diversity of culture, linguistic variation, and attitudes evolution of society.

Comedy can either be light and amusing or can be serious with profound themes in a lighthearted satirical way. It is versatile and varies in form and emotion, with various types including farce, joke, wordplay, parody, satire, drawing-room comedy, shock, gross-out humor and casual humor.⁶ An encounter with comedy involves:

1. A receiver receiving comedic information (this can be anyone, you, me, etc.)
2. A response (a joke or any comedic stimulus)
3. A visual representation of the incident (laughter, a smile, rolling eyes) Describing graphically as in (Fig 2.1).

⁴ Cyrus Henry Hoy, “Comedy, Literature and Performance,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 11, 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/art/comedy>.

⁵ Kelley Holley and Heather Carroll, “Comedy: Types and History,” *Study.com*, <https://study.com/learn/lesson/comedy-types-history.html>.

⁶ Dan O’Shannon, *What Are You Laughing At?*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012, <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/what-are-you-laughing-at-9781441162939/>.

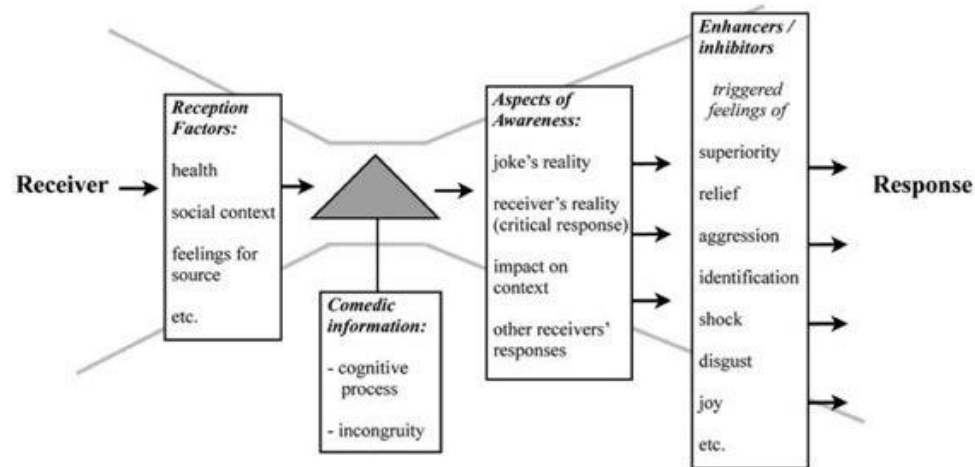


Fig 2. 1: Describing Comedy graphically.

Source: "Funny Spaces" *Media.newyorker.com*,

https://media.newyorker.com/photos/590950fe6552fa0be682baeb/master/w_1600,c_limit/1-funny-spaces.jpg.

Accessed October 12, 2023.

In contemporary times, comedic information encompasses anything we find amusing, including formally structured jokes, entertaining occurrences, and random humorous thoughts. Several comedic styles offer diverse forms of entertainment.⁷ Some of the widely appreciated comedic genres include Slapstick Comedy, it revolves around facial expressions, physical comedy and stunts. This type became famous in the early 20th century and included comedians like Charlie Chaplin (Fig 2.2). Dark comedy, also known as black comedy, revolves around comedic elements and uses grim subjects such as death, war and crime. Romantic comedy is a genre that skillfully intertwines themes of love with humor.



Fig 2. 2: Charlie Chaplin in the 1915 film *His New Job and Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949).

Source: "Charlie Chaplin," *Doctormacro.com*,

<http://doctormacro.com/Movie%20Summaries/H/His%20New%20Job.htm>,

<https://www.tasteofcinema.com/2017/11-great-british-dark-comedies-that-are-worth-your-time/>.

Accessed October 12, 2023.

⁷ MasterClass. "13 Types of Comedy: Popular Types of Comedic Performance." *MasterClass*, September 27, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/types-of-comedy>.

High comedy derives humor from the relationships and dynamics within a cast of characters. This comedic style became a popular format on Television in programs such as, *The Office* (2005–2013) and *Seinfeld* (1989–1998) show (Fig 2.3). Parody is playfully mimicking existing works through imitation and exaggeration. A notable example of parody films includes *Young Frankenstein* (1974). Surreal humor, the subgenre of humor digs into absurd situations that defy logic and reason. Socio-Political comedy focuses on deriving entertainment from political situations, a means to promote political discourse in situations through comedy. Wordplay comedy with clever use of language employ to make audiences laugh. This includes methods like puns, sound repetition, and rhymes.



Fig 2. 3: The Office (2005–2013) and Seinfeld (1989–1998) show.

Source: “Image gallery for The Office and Seinfeld,” *Filmaffinity.com*,
<https://www.filmaffinity.com/us/movieimage.php?imageId=221016016>, <https://www.blu-ray.com/Seinfeld/87333/>.
 Accessed October 12, 2023.

Comedy is often characterized into three main theories: incongruity, superiority, and relief theory. These categories are different but sometimes interconnected. The most known theory is incongruity theory. It declares that comedy arises when a comedian delivers something startling. One of the earliest followers of this theory was Aristotle, he defined incongruity comedy as something that gives a twist.⁸ Aristotle further proclaimed.

⁸ Matthew Harris, “Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects 497,” 2009,
https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/497/.

“The effect is produced even by jokes depending upon changes of the letters of a word. This too is a surprise. You find this in verse as well as in prose. The word which comes is not what the hearer imagined.”⁹

Superiority theory centers around the idea that comedy comes from a superior feeling to others or to their former self. Thomas Hobbes expressed this idea by stating that humor arises when we perceive ourselves as superior.

“The passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly.”¹⁰

According to Henry Hazlitt, “We grow tired of everything but turning others into ridicule and congratulating ourselves on their defects.”¹¹ Superiority theory is effective in political humor, where laughter often comes at the expense of another political party.

Relief theory is concerned with why we laugh rather than what makes something funny. According to relief theories, laughter is seen as a way to release excess energy and tension. In Freud's version of relief theory, he related laughter with the release of various kinds of energies, like emotional or hostile energies. However, relief theory doesn't do much for the study of political humor because, it explains the process of laughter, it doesn't address purposeful jokes, which incongruity and superiority theories cover.¹²

Marvin Minsky suggests that laughter has a purpose, to interrupt absurd thinking and prevent it from continuing. Whereas, relief theory is not very helpful in studying socio-political humor because relief theory describes the process of laughter. It doesn't address the purposeful jokes that incongruity and superiority theories discuss.¹³ Sigmund Freud stated that, joke has two types i.e., tendentious joke, which delivers a purpose, and innocent jokes, which aim to make

⁹ Mary K Rothbart, “*Incongruity, Problem-Solving and Laughter. Humor and Laughter: Theory, Research, and Applications*,” ed. Antony J Chapman and Hugh C Foot (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 37–54.

¹⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Human Nature*, *Online Library of Liberty*, April 21, 2009, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/publications/reading-room/2023-10-31-temnick-thomas-hobbes-leviathan>.

¹¹ Cantor, Dolf Zillmann, and Joanne R, “*A Disposition Theory of Humour and Mirth. Humor and Laughter Theory, Research, and Applications*,” ed. Antony J, Chapman, and Hugh C Foot (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 93–115.

¹² Aaron Smuts, “Humor,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, April 17, 2009, <https://iep.utm.edu/humor/>.

¹³ Marvin Minsky, “Jokes and the Logic of the Cognitive Unconscious,” *MIT.edu*, November 1980, <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/5701>.

people laugh without any certain purpose.¹⁴ Theodor Vischer categorized the second type as abstract jokes, while Charles Gruner simply called innocent jokes or humor.¹⁵

Comedy is as old as the Greek civilization; nevertheless, when it comes to theatrical comedy, historical evidence proposes that it developed in or just before the Classical Age of ancient Greece. The term comedy originated from the Greek term *komoidia*, and sooner or later, found their place at the comedic performances of Dionysia festival. Moreover, evidence shows that this early form of comedic performances, often mentioned to as old comedy was perhaps not the first form performed at the Dionysia (Fig 2.4).¹⁶ Before that, pre-classical playwrights and dramatist were creating short, humorous plays known as satyr plays, including loud and roguish characters called satyrs. In the Classical Age, satyr plays showed the performance of tragic series, making them the oldest form of comedic drama.¹⁷

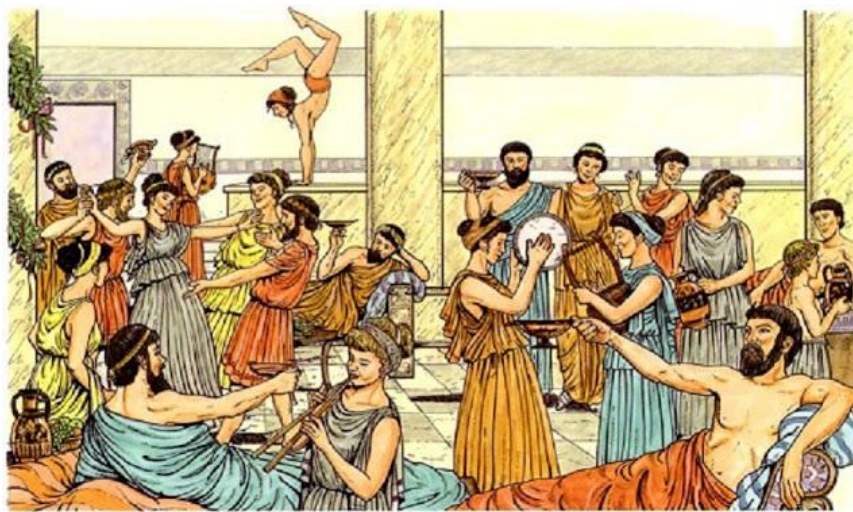


Fig 2. 4: Dionysia, the original Greek Carnival (Apokreas).
Source: "Grecker Than the Greeks," *Greckerthanthegreeks.com*,
<https://greckerthanthegreeks.com>. Accessed October 12, 2023.

Despite the diverse perspectives on humor there are numerous works, some directly inspired by Greek culture, however drama and theater developed organically in ancient Egypt,

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1960), https://repository.mdx.ac.uk/download/b36293ca540952ac580244c2649eebd848b0fb8f8ed2cf895831c55494c11d04/4304769/Pe_peli_thesis.pdf.

¹⁵ Charles R. Gruner, "Humor and Laughter: Theory, Research, and Applications," in *Wit and Humour in Mass Communication*, ed. Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot (1996): 287–311.

¹⁶ From Greek *kōmōidia*, from *kōmōidos* 'comic poet', from *kōmos* 'revel' and *aoidos* 'singer'. The first comedies were mainly satirical and mocked men in power for their vanity and foolishness. The first master of comedy was the playwright Aristophanes.

¹⁷ Mark Damen, "308 Early Greek Comedy and Satyr Plays, Classical Drama and Theatre," *USU.edu*, 2021, <https://www.usu.edu/markdamen/clasdram/chapters/081earlygkcom.htm>.

Etruria, Roman Italy, India, China and Japan. Rome and mediaeval Europe's development was overtaken by ancient Greek drama, whereas in the other cases (India, China and Japan), it is still often claimed that the seed of drama spread from Greece. In short, the drama found in these and other cultures still seems remote, as Greece still maintains a privileged position in universal theories of the origin of drama.¹⁸

The initial known connections and relations between Ancient Rome and Ancient India arose during the rule of the first Roman Emperor, Augustus in 27 BCE – 14 BCE. Some scholars think Indian drama traditions began after the Greek and Roman dramatic traditions but faced a decline after the Islamic conquests during tenth to eleventh century.¹⁹ However, Indian scholars disagree and says it began much earlier than the Greek and Roman traditions.²⁰ Among the oldest recorded comedies, there are indications of humor centered around political satire, inebriated conduct, and sexuality. These jests find their roots in ancient Egypt.²¹ Concurrently, Mesopotamia also boasts some of the earliest jokes, touching upon themes similar to those in ancient Egypt. The earliest story of comedy was not performed publicly but it appeared to have been made for a substantial group. The comedic description, titled the "Poor Man of Nippur," was inscribed in time of ancient Mesopotamia in Nippur, around 1500 BCE or even earlier (Fig 2.5).²²



Fig 2. 5: Terracotta Tablet from the poem Poor Man of Nippur.

Source: "Poor Man of Nippur," *Worldhistory.org*,

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/2145/poor-man-of-nippur/>. Accessed October 12, 2023

¹⁸ Eric Csapo and Margaret C. Miller, eds., *The Origins of Theater in Ancient Greece and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.), https://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/36821/excerpt/9780521836821_excerpt.pdf.

¹⁹ Edith Hall et al., "India, Greece, and Rome, 1757 to 2007," *Oxford Journal* 108 (2010): 159–80, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44216106>.

²⁰ Anuru Ranjan Mishra, *Dasarupaka Critical Study* (2015).

²¹ Joshua J. Mark, "Poor Man of Nippur," *World History Encyclopedia*, January 17, 2023, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/2145/poor-man-of-nippur/>.

²² O. R. Gurney, "The Sultantepe Tablets (Continued). V. The Tale of the Poor Man of Nippur," *Anatolian Studies* 6 (December 1956): 145–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3642407>.

The influences between different cultures and their impacts on one another can be seen throughout history. For instance, Alexander's presence allowed the Greek and Macedonian people to interact with local Indian communities, while showing a certain readiness and openness towards embracing their cultures and customs. Generally, a hybrid culture or a community can develop when different group of cultures respect and accept the norms of one another. Notably, such developments do not ascend immediately but are an outcome of several interactions over many years. The formation of new cities by Alexander throughout his Asian campaigns may have indirectly contributed towards the blending of Greek and Indian culture, thus giving birth to Greco-Indian spirit.²³ It can be perceived in historical inscriptions, for instance a funerary epigram, that hint towards a cultural exchange that occurred during that time.

Plutarch enlightens us that when Alexander civilized Asia, Homer was read by the children of the Persians, Susians and Gedrosians, who sang the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles. This suggests that in cities like *Sāgala*, (North India) and *Kandahar* (Indo-Greek city), Greek plays were perhaps staged. It's also likely that Greek plays were performed for kings of Kushan who admired Greek culture (Fig 2.6). This indicates that there was an interest in Greek dramas in local societies, which may have been caused due to the education they were receiving as it included Greek literature. Naturally this suggests that Greek literature had some influence on local Indian literature and drama.²⁴



Fig 2. 6: The Kushan Empire.

Source: "Kushan Empire," *Clearias.com*,
<https://www.clearias.com/up/Kushan-empire.png>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

²³ Gary Reger, "Review of *Fraser, Cities of Alexander the Great*, by Peter Marshall," April 25, 1997, <https://bmc.brynmawr.edu/1997/1997.04.25/>.

²⁴ Chandima S. M. Wickramasinghe, "The Indian Invasion of Alexander and the Emergence of Hybrid Cultures," *Indian Historical Review* 48, no. 1 (2021): 69–91.

Aristophanes was the one who extensively wrote some of the earliest known comic plays in ancient Greece out of which only 11 have survived. The first one, *The Acharnians* was performed in 425 BCE. His comedy was unique in its structure, focusing more on episodes than a traditional plot. Wit was used as an alternative in a bold and risqué nature, to shed light on serious matters. It combined criticism, buffoonery, and even song and dance (Fig 2.7).²⁵ Old comedy, however, faced censure for its use of mockery and invasive language, which led to legal restrictions to limit its excesses. Aristophanes, crafted raucous and socio-politically thrilling plays that reflected the social issues of his time. With his sharp humor, he satirized Athenian politicians and public figures, with both serious and satirical scenarios. However, the consequence from the Peloponnesian War brought tighter financial plan and a duller political climate to Athens. This change is evident in Aristophanes' later works from the Post-Classical Age, which show a decrease in special effects and elaborate vocal verses. Instead, comedy was developing towards following standard funny situations and stereotypical characters, reflecting the restraints of the time.



Fig 2. 7: The Acharnians.

Source: "Representatives of Athens and Corinth at the Court of Archidamas," *ancient-literature.com*, <https://ancient-literature.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Representatives-of-Athens-and-Corinth-at-the-Court-of-Archidamas.jpg>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

This transition can be seen in the emergence of New Comedy, mainly known from the fragments of plays by Menander (c. 342–c. 292 BCE) and from plays written in imitation by the Romans Plautus (c. 254–184 BCE) and Terence (195 or 185–159 BCE) (Fig 2.8).²⁶ However, New

²⁵ Ellen Glasgow, "Kinds of Comedy in Diverse Historical Periods," *Britannica*, n.d.

²⁶ "Comedy 20th-Century Tragicomedy," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/art/comedy/20th-century-tragicomedy>.

Comedy introduced a higher level of plot articulation that was not seen in the past. The focus of New Comedy's action is often centered on plotting; for example, a clever servant devises intricate plans to help his young master win the girl of his choice. While New Comedy includes satire, it is milder compared to the sharp ridicule found in Old Comedy. The plots in New Comedy typically revolve around love intrigues, with an emphasis on cleverly crafted schemes to achieve romantic goals.²⁷ In New Comedy, the way Aristophanes portrayed public figures and events shifted to depicting the private affairs, usually involving love, of imaginary characters.²⁸



Fig 2. 8: Plays by Menander, Plautus and Terence.

Sources: "Relief with Menander and New Comedy," [ancientliterature.com](https://www.ancientliterature.com/wpcontent/uploads/2019/08/Relief_with_Menander_and_New_Comedy_Masks.jpg),
<https://www.usu.edu/markdamen/clasdrum/images/14/masksonshelves.jpg>,
<https://www.usu.edu/markdamen/clasdrum/images/14/adelphe.jpg>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

The roots of comedic theater can also be traced back to earlier civilizations like Mesopotamia and Egypt. Ancient Greece is best known for its formalization of plays into satire, tragedy, and comedy. In the first millennium, Greek theater began to evolve and by this time Romans laid the foundation for the progress of entertainment in Roman society. Notable Roman comedic writers: Titus Maccius Plautus²⁹ and Publius Terentius Afer³⁰ were active in the 2nd and 3rd century BC and played a significant role in shaping this evolution (Fig 2.9). Their content initially drew inspiration from Greek themes, however the Romans through the works of these authors, gradually introduced a more contemporary essence that continues to influence modern

²⁷ Mark Cartwright, "Ancient Greek Comedy," *World History Encyclopedia*, March 25, 2013, https://www.worldhistory.org/Greek_Comedy/.

²⁸ "New Comedy," *Ancient World History*, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/art/New-Comedy>.

²⁹ Plautus, born around 254 BCE in Sarsina, Umbria, Italy, and passing away in 184 BCE, was a distinguished Roman comic dramatist. His plays, which were loosely based on Greek originals, played a pivotal role in the development of authentic Roman drama in the Latin language.

³⁰ Publius Terentius Afer, also known as Terence in English, served as a Roman African playwright in the Roman Republic, with his comedies debuting around 170-160 BC. Terence's enduring legacy involves the widespread use of his plays for learning Latin in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Period, and his influence is evident in some of Shakespeare's works.

comedies in theater and television. One pivotal advancement was the narrative structure, where stories were unfolded across a series of episodes within the overarching plot. The characters in these stories faced trials or tribulations, ultimately finding comedic resolutions to their predicaments.³¹



Fig 2. 9: Titus Maccius Plautus (250-184). Latin playwright. *Asinaria*. Act III. Argyrippus, Philaenium, Litanus and Leonida. Engraving. 1518 and Scene from Terentius' play *Andria*.

Sources: "Bernard Picart (French, 1673 - 1733) The Rijksmuseum," *Poetryintranslation.com*, <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/TerenceAndria.php>, <https://www.album-online.com/detail/en/MWJkNTg4MA/titus-maccius-plautus-latin-playwright-asinaria-act-iii-argyrippus-philanum-alb1467235?sT=titus+maccius+plautus&iSF=3>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

The Middle Comedy period is identified as a dark era in history of theater where no complete ancient comic dramas have survived. Though some changes can be speculated that may have occurred during this time but much remains uncertain. Towards the end of the fourth century BCE, Greek comedy resurfaced in an altered form, categorized by stereotypes and questionable coincidences. This era, often labelled as the Age of New Comedy, where Menander appear as a prominent figure. As the master of this genre, he crafted lasting theatrical works positioned around comedic scenarios and larger-than-life characters. Through his comedies, chiefly the comedy of manners, Menander offered thoughtful reflections on society and life.

According to Andrew Hartwig's research, the end of the 4th century witnessed a significant and inventive shift for comedy. Although Old Comedy gained popularity in the Greek West, it received minimal attention in Athens and exerted limited influence on the comedic productions of that time. The comic genre of the 4th century BCE was spurred by the growth of theater and the participation of several foreign poets in Athens who introduced novel themes, situations,

³¹ "How Did Comedy Develop Over Time," *DailyHistory.org*, n.d., https://www.dailyhistory.org/How_did_Comedy_develop_overtime.

characters, and ethics. The idea of Panhellenic emerged during this period and continued to resonate in the works of playwrights like Menander and beyond.³² Before the fifth century B.C., Greeks would perform stories from mythology or history.³³ Aristotle identified other types of dramas like comedy and satyr with elements of tragedy, when it came to Greek culture and art, they thrived internationally, and their influence started spreading all over the Mediterranean.³⁴

Old Comedy gained popularity slower than the satyr plays, but eventually rose to prominence by the end of the fifth century. Greeks continued to execute comedies at spiritual festivals in the 5th century BCE, a new form of comedy was beginning to develop with noteworthy figures like Aristophanes³⁵, Terence³⁶, Menander³⁷, and Plautus³⁸ who shaped comedy in classical literature.³⁹ Comedies during the 5th century BCE were performed in competitions at important religious festivals. These competitions spanned over three days, with five primarily and later three comedies for competition each day. Comedic plays were performed at the end of the day following tragedies and satyr plays. A panel of ten judges, selected by lot, evaluated the plays and voted by placing pebbles in an urn. The final winner was determined by randomly selecting five urns. A new kind of comedy emerged in Greece, during late 5th century BCE. Some plays from this timeline suggest a gradual modification but this change might not have happened suddenly. According to experts there might have been a middle period in between called Middle Comedy. The transition to this new style can be seen in last two plays by Aristophanes. This New Comedy focused more on the story and often used characters like cooks, soldiers, and clever servants.⁴⁰

Over the last three centuries this meaning has kept on. The primary signs of comedy inside Greece come from pottery within the sixth century BCE wherein ornament and decoration items represented actors dressed as animals, satyrs, and dancers. Additionally, during 6th and 7th century,

³² Eric Csapo, "Review of *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century B.C.*," *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2014, accessed November 29, 2024, <https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2014/2014.11.36/>.

³³ David L. Simpson, "Comedy and Tragedy," *DePaul University*, 2019, <https://condor.depaul.edu/dsimpson/tlove/comic-tragic.html>.

³⁴ A satyr play is an ancient Greek play of tragicomedy that presents itself as a tragedy while incorporating a happy, almost funny atmosphere.

³⁵ Aristophanes was the son of Philippus, of the deme Kydathenaion. He was a comic playwright or comedy-writer of ancient Athens and a poet of Old Attic Comedy. Eleven of his forty plays survive virtually complete.

³⁶ Publius Terentius Afer, known as Terence. He was a Roman playwright from Africa during the Roman Republic. His comedic plays were first performed roughly between 166–160 BC.

³⁷ Menander was a Greek playwright and a notable figure in Athenian New Comedy.

³⁸ Titus Maccius Plautus, an ancient Roman playwright, lived during the period of Old Latin. Plautus comedies are the earliest works in Latin literature that have been preserved.

³⁹ "Carole Lombard Summary," *Britannica*, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/summary/comedy>.

⁴⁰ Peter Walsh, "The Art of Greek Comedy," *University Review* 1, no. 10 (1956): 49–58.

early source of comedy is seen in the poems of Archilochus and Hipponax, which contain rudimentary and unambiguous humour (Fig 2.10). A third foundation, lies within the phallic songs which had been sung during dionysiac festivals.⁴¹

128 Stob. 3.20.28

Ἀρχιλόχου·
 θυμέ, θυμέ, ἀμηχάνοισι κήδεσσιν κυκώμενε, ἴαναδεν
 δυσμενῶν δ' ἀλέξεο προσβαλὼν ἐναντίον·
 στέρνον ἐνδοκοῖσιν ἔχθρῶν πλησίον
 κατασταθεῖς
 ἀσφαλῆως· καὶ μήτε νικέων ἀμφάδην ἀγάλλεο
 μηδὲ νικηθεὶς ἐν οἴκῳ καταπεσὼν ὀδύρεο,
 ἀλλὰ χαρτοῖσιν τε χαῖρε καὶ κακοῖσιν ἀσχαλα
 μὴ λήν, γίνωσκε δ' οἷος ῥυσμὸς ἀνθρώπου
 ἔχει.

Epitaph Of Hipponax

Epitaph Of Hipponax Poem by Jon Cordeis Theocritus

Behold Hipponax' burialplace,
 A true bard's grave.
 Approach it not, if you're a base
 And base-horn knave.
 But if your sires were honest men
 And unblamed you,
 Sit down thereon serenely then,
 And eke sleep too.

Tuneful Hipponax rests him here,
 Let no base rascal venture near.
 Ye who rank high in birth and mind
 Sit down-and sleep, if so inclined.

Jon Cordeis Theocritus

Fig 2. 10: Poems of Archilochus and Hipponax.

Source: "Archilochus of Paros and Hipponax the National Museum of Language," *languagemuseum.org*,
<https://languagemuseum.org/exhibits/the-power-of-poetry-exhibit/poetry-from-greece/archilochus-of-paros/>,
<https://internetpoem.com/jon-corelis-theocritus/epitaph-of-hipponax-poem/>. Accessed October 12, 2023.

Greek comedy plays followed a conventional structure despite innovations. The first part, the parados, featured a chorus of up to 24 performers entering and performing song and dance routines in outlandish costumes, sometimes representing animals or objects (Fig 2.11). The play changed into frequently named after the refrain. The second section, the agon, worried witty verbal contests or debates between actors, with fantastical plot factors and fast-converting scenes. The parabasis was the third part, where the chorus directly addressed the audience and spoke for the poet. The finale, the exodos, featured another rousing song and dance routine by the chorus.



Fig 2. 11: Scene from a burlesque, in which the actors are wearing the short tunics and tubular pants of Greek Old Comedy, showing Heracles tempting Apollo; detail of a phlyax krater in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

Source: "Burlesque Scene tunics actors' pants phlyax krater," *Britannica.com*,
<https://cdn.britannica.com/58/4658-050-FC711EC1/burlesque-Scene-tunics-actors-pants-phlyax-krater.jpg>. Accessed October 12, 2023.

⁴¹ "Ancient Greek Comedy: History, Structure, Aristophanes and Menander," Posted May 7, By World History Encyclopedia, YouTube, 2021, 8:34, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63HsPN6FJwE>.

All performers included male professional actors, singers and dancers and they have been helped in their endeavor to symbolize a large type of human and non-human characters through outstanding costumes and embellished face mask. The primary actors - one protagonist (who took the predominant percent of the limelight) and other actors, did all the speaking components (Fig 1.12). Occasionally, a fourth actor was accredited but most effective if non-instrumental to the plot. The chorus, costumes, musicians, and practice session time had been funded by an appointed personal citizen, a *chorēgos*,⁴² which changed into a role carrying terrific prestige. The constrained variety of actors then, each performer had to take on multiple roles which worried speedy adjustments of gown and using recognizable person masks such as those for slaves or gods like Hercules and Hermes. Similarly, some masks may also properly be decorated to symbolize in caricature technique certain current figures that the poet needed to poke fun at. However, masks deprive the actor of the usage of facial expressions and consequently the usage of voice and gesture became extraordinarily important. Costumes were an important visible part of the performance, that included; a padded tight, a quick tunic that used a false and exaggerated *phallus* (linked with Dionysian ritual) an element actually seen on many comic scenes represented on Greek pottery.⁴³



Fig 2. 12: A marble relief depicting theatre masks as worn by actors in both Greek and Roman tragedies and comedies. 2nd century CE (Vatican Museums, Rome). Source: "Greek Comedy," [worldhistory.org](https://www.worldhistory.org/Greek_Comedy/) Accessed October 12, 2023.

⁴² Translation: *chorēgos* (leader of a chorus or choir).

⁴³ Nilesh Sathvara and Shri H.K, "Comedy in Greek Theatre," *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences* 9, no. 2 (February 2019).

Plays in Greece were performed in open-air theatron (theaters) like the Dionysos in Athens and was accessible to all men, though the presence of women is contested. The existence of theaters across Greece and terracotta theater masks suggests widespread performances of both comedies and tragedies. The theaters included a central area called the orchestra, where the chorus was performed and a raised stage with a background provided by the skēne, a two-story structure with entrances for actors and costume changes. Movement between these areas occurred with the chorus sometimes climbing the stage and actors entering the orchestra through public entrances called parodoi (Fig 2.13).⁴⁴



Fig 2. 13: The theatre of Delphi and the temple of Apollo (4th century BCE).
Source: "Greek Comedy," *Worldhistory.org*,
https://www.worldhistory.org/Greek_Comedy/. Accessed October 13, 2023.

Conclusively, comedy has advanced through centuries while adapting to cultural and societal changes and maintaining its core function of critiquing and entertaining. From its origins in ancient Greece, it emerged through organized performances at festivals where comedy transformed into a varied genre with various forms ranging from slapstick to dark humor. The theories of incongruity, superiority and relief have shaped the understanding of why people laugh, while socio-political, romantic and parody comedies have become effective tools for examining societal norms and power dynamics. The historical roots of comedy stretch across different civilizations notably the Greeks and Romans, whose works have left an enduring legacy on modern comedic theater, television, and literature. Comedy through light-hearted satire or deeper humorous commentary, serves as a mirror reflecting the complexities of human nature and society and making it profound and accessible forms of entertainment throughout history.

⁴⁴ Kelley Rees, "The Significance of the Parodoi in the Greek Theater," *American Journal of Philology* 32, no. 4 (January 1, 1911): 377-77.

CHAPTER 3

EVOLUTION OF COMEDY IN SOUTH ASIA

In the previous chapter, comedy was discussed from a worldwide perspective, however, in this chapter the focus will be on comedy in South Asia, especially India where the idea of comedy is different from the west. Indian comedy dates as far back as the 1st century and is a combination of both Sanskrit drama and Indian folk traditions. According to *Bharata* comedy is also referred to as *hāsyā* and is derived from erotic but Abhinava Gupta states that comedy may be developed from any type of sentiments like tragedy, furious, marvelous, heroic, terrible and disgusting content. *Bhoja* additionally objects to Bharata's view that comedy is derived from erotic only, he states that it can additionally be derived from any other sentiments. Bharata has defined laughter as the sentiment born out of the permanent or dominant mood called *mirth* (*hāsa*). The word comedy is derived from the basis "*has*". Therefore, the purpose of *Prahasana* is to burst into laughter. In fact, *Prahasana* is the oldest form of drama and has existed even before Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (Fig 3.1). The Rigveda refers to the *Prahasana* through a conversation between Indra and his spouse Indrānī from *tenth mandala*.⁴⁵ The conversation has given the perfect form to the *Prahasana*. From the statement of Bharata, it is clear that *Prahasana* is the oldest stage development and most popular in the history of Sanskrit drama.⁴⁶

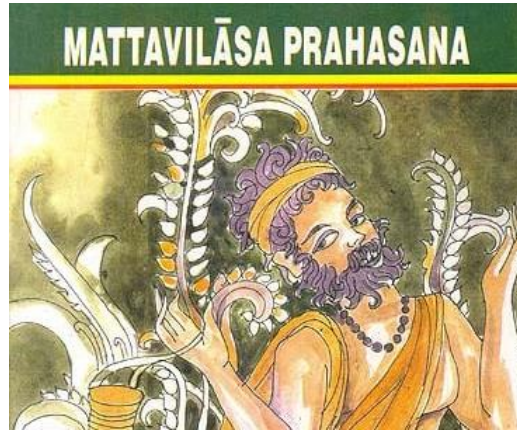


Fig 3. 1: Mattavilasa Prahasana.

Source: *Exoticindia.com*

<https://cdn.exoticindia.com/images/products/original/books/naj314.jpg>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

⁴⁵ The tenth mandala (Chapter of the Rigveda).

⁴⁶ Anuru Ranjan Mishra, "Dasarupaka Critical Study," *Wisdom lib*, Introduction to the Prahasana Type of Drama, 2015, <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/essay/dasarupaka-critical-study/d/doc628554.html>.

Natya-Shastra written by Bharata in the 2nd century evolved from the Sanskrit drama theory. Sanskrit drama is more comical than tragic, according to the individuality's theory of the Rasa, half of the emotional spectrum is mirrored in drama (Fig 3.2).⁴⁷ Sanskrit comedy is commonly put into two categories, *Nataka* (the plays) and *Prabandha* (the stories). Generally, the wit is generated from some travesty upon the main theme, the outside stories and a mixture of the two stories. Due to the convolutedness of the plots the plays and dramas are usually not easy to follow and despite translations and performances they are significantly harder for even an educated Indian to understand. Sanskrit humour is dependent mainly on puns and playing with words as well as on humorous entendre. This kind of humour was prominent in Indian comedy but is seemingly disappearing in the modern form. There was the prime form of rural entertainment in India in the last 2000 years and these stories were also showed in folk theatre.⁴⁸ The Bhagavata is of specific importance to Sutradhars (traditional Indian jesters). Sutradhars were a key part of Sanskrit drama; their own brand of wit is the only form of comedy that is still reproducible in a recognizable form.⁴⁹

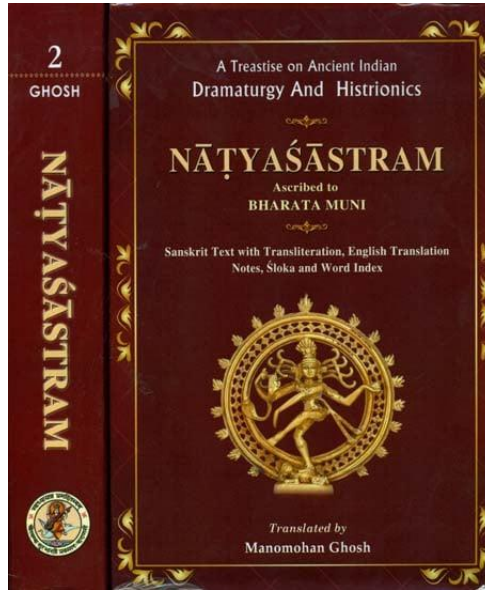


Fig 3. 2: Natya-Shastra written by Bharata with Transliteration and English Translation (Set of 2 Volumes).
Source: *Exoticindia.com*, <https://cdn.exoticindia.com/images/products/original/books-2016/nal649.jpg>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

⁴⁷ Elena Mucciarelli and Adheesh Sathaye, "Transcreating Sanskrit Humour through Kūṭiyāṭṭam: The Translation and Performance of the Rasasadana Bhāṇa," *Asian Literature and Translation* 11, no. 1 (March 14, 2024): 16–51.

⁴⁸ Vinay Lal, *India and Its Intellectual Traditions: Of Love, Advaita, Power, and Other Things: Backwaters Collective on Metaphysics and Politics III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), Google Books.

⁴⁹ ClearIAS Team, "Ancient Indian Literature," *ClearIAS*, December 17, 2022, <https://www.clearias.com/ancient-indian-literature/>.

Indian Sanskrit drama experienced notable growth during the period, spanning between the 3rd and 7th centuries, representing the cultural and social dynamics. In this era, comedic performances were an essential part of Indian civilization. One notable form of comedy during this period was Sanskrit drama, which flourished predominantly under the support of rulers and kings. Comedies of Sanskrit were known as *natya* or *Nataka* (drama), performed in royal palaces and public get-togethers to entertain spectators with their wit and humor.⁵⁰ Plays for instance the *Mrichakatika* by Shudraka and *Swapnavasavadatta* are exemplary of the comedic elements widespread during this era.⁵¹ During this period *Bhasa* was one notable playwright figure, whose comedies were written in Sanskrit and provided insights into the cultural and social aspects of society. Bhasa's plays, for instance *Uttararamacarita* had elements of both humor and satire. These works often highlighted witty dialogues, clever wordplay, and hilarious situations (Fig 3.3). The comedic elements were intertwined with the wider narratives, themes of love, morality and politics.⁵² Moreover, notable examples are the appearance of Sanskrit plays such as *natya* and *prahasana*, which precisely focused on humor and satire.⁵³ These plays were considered humorous and light-hearted by their nature, often poking fun at societal norms and resolutions.⁵⁴

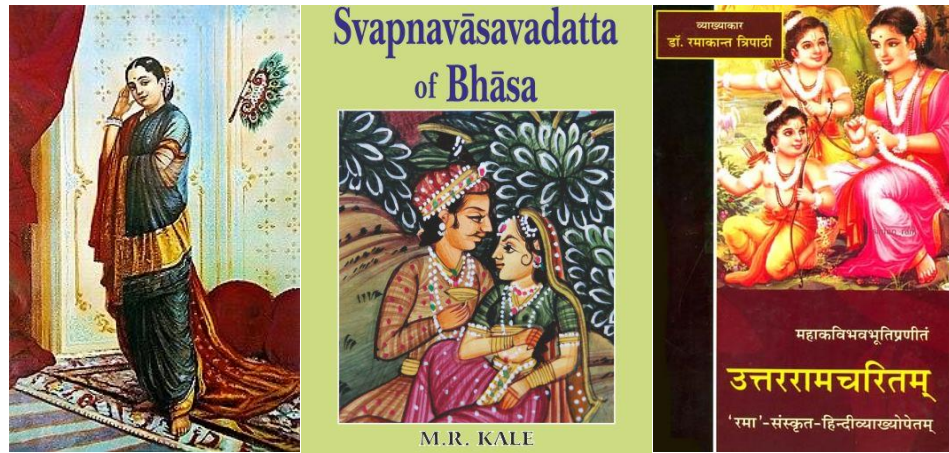


Fig 3. 3: *Mrichakatika* (The Little Clay Cart), *Swapnavasavadatta* and *Uttararamacarita*.

Sources: “Raja Ravi Varma Vasanthasena (Oleographic print),” [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Raja_Ravi_Varma,_Vasanthasena_(Oleographic_print).jpg),
<https://www.motilalbanarsidass.com/products/swapnavasavadatta-of-bhasa-edited-with-a-short-sanskrit-commentary-english-translation-and-critical-notes>, <https://www.ibpbooks.com/uttararamacarita-of-mahakavi-bhavabhuti-edited-with-rama-sanskrit-hindi-commentaries/p/35658>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

⁵⁰ Sanskrit term for dramatic art of the classical variety.

⁵¹ T. Ganapati Sastri, “*Swapnavasavadatta* of Bhasa,” *Internet Archive*, 1912. https://archive.org/details/swapnavasavadatta_bhasa.

⁵² Bharathi Ramasubban, “Bhasa,” *Sahapedia*, September 26, 2017, <https://www.sahapedia.org/bhasa>.

⁵³ A comic form of Sanskrit theatre which satirizes reprehensible religious figures, such as hypocritical ascetics and brahmins.

⁵⁴ Bhimrao Bhosale, “*Bharata’s Natyashastra: Fundamentals of Dramatics and Aesthetics*,” n.d., 1–9.

Furthermore, comedic traditions of India can also be found in folk performances and regional theater forms. These native comedic arts, entrenched in local customs and traditions, showcase a wide range of characters, stories, and comedic practices. From humor to entertaining wordplay, Indian comedy in this era embraced a lot of themes, catering to the tastes and preferences of varied audiences. The era from the 8th centuries onwards till 12th century observed a vivacious and dynamic period in Indian comedy history. Numerous local forms of comedy came up which were quite diverse and firmly rooted in regional cultures providing an interesting contrast to the earlier tradition and set the tradition for the comedy that followed later.⁵⁵ In the northern and western areas, there was a tradition of ironic wit and satire. It was mainly due to the influence from the Muslim rulers of the time, the comedians made jokes of the set of circumstances and lifestyle of the people (Fig 3.4).⁵⁶ An illustrative example of this type of comedy might be seen in the plays of *Bhanudatta*, and also in the several tales of the witty courtier from the court of Akbar and Birbal.

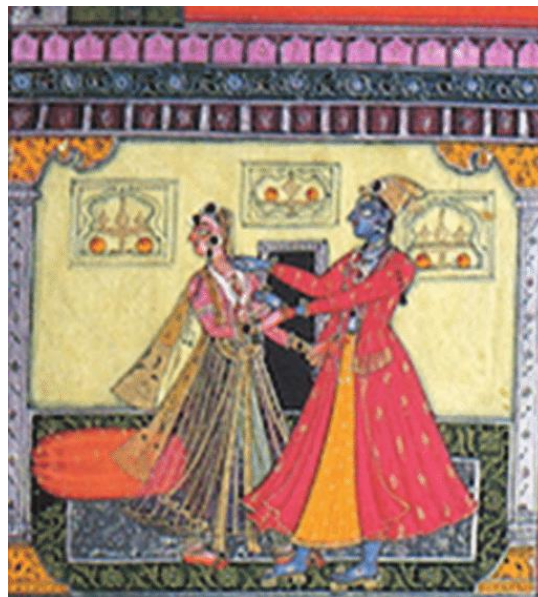


Fig 3. 4: Illustration of Bhanudatta's Rasamanjari Pahari, Basohli, ca. 1675-1700, Opaque watercolor on paper Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, 374. 31. Source: "Illustration of Bhanudattas Rasamanjari Pahari Basohli ca 1675-1700-Opaque," *Researchgate.net*, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Illustration-of-Bhanudattas-Rasamanjari-Pahari-Basohli-ca-1675-1700-Opaque_fig3_283526322. Accessed October 13, 2023.

In contrast to the northern tradition, there was a more non-verbal and slapstick comedy tradition that came up in South India. The Veeranna and Bhasa's play are good examples of this

⁵⁵ Frank J. Korom and Kathryn Hansen, "Grounds for Play: The Nautanki Theatre of North India," *Ethnomusicology* 39, no. 2 (1995): 282, <https://doi.org/10.2307/924432>.

⁵⁶ Sahdev Luhar, *Folklore Studies in India: Critical Regional Responses*, (N. S. Patel (Autonomous) Arts College, Anand, 2023). Google Books.

comedic style. This style was also characterized by dance sequences and witty skits which were later developed into independent art forms in South India.⁵⁷ This was the dawn of the tradition of southern slapstick, it exists till today and the most recent example is the Chakyar Koothu recitals (Fig 3.5).⁵⁸



Fig 3. 5:Performing Arts in Kerala Chakyar Koothu.
Source: "Chakyar Koothu 1799," *keralatourism.org*,
<https://www.keralatourism.org/photo-gallery/chakyarkoothu/1799>. Accessed October 13, 2023.

In short, the 10th century, Koothiyattam in Kerala is considered as India's oldest living tradition and form of theatre.⁵⁹ It draws on the plays of renowned Sanskrit dramatists of India. In 2001, Koothiyattam was declared one of the *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* by UNESCO.⁶⁰ Koodiyattam presents boundless opportunities for aesthetic delight. Before the actual performance, there are prelude rituals and an introduction unrelated to the play's theme. The plays utilize comedy, humor, and sarcasm in fluent Malayalam language, amusing the audience through satirical portrayals. Following the introduction, the performance incorporates dance, with characters rehearsing Sanskrit verses in a monotone manner.⁶¹

Sanskrit theatre was an essential part of religious celebrations and conveyed important messages through its stories. Each play personified a specific emotion that resonated with the audience. This rich ritual introduced the concept of *Rasa*, which explores the emotional influence

⁵⁷ Arun Kumar & Priyanka, *Early India Up to AD 1350*, (Ashok Yakkaldevi, 2020). Google Books.

⁵⁸ Lalithaa Krishnan. "The Enduring Charm of Chakyar Koothu." *The Hindu*, January 24, 2019.

⁵⁹ Neha Grover, "Sanskrit Theatre - Art and Culture Notes," Prep, November 9, 2023, <https://prepp.in/news/e-492-sanskrit-theatre-art-and-culture-notes>.

⁶⁰ Sudha Gopalakrishnan, "Kutiyattam," Sahapedia, August 14, 2018, <https://www.sahapedia.org/kutiyattam>.

⁶¹ "Dance Forms: Koodiyattam," Encyclopedia, n.d., <https://www.encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/dance-forms-koodiyattam>.

of theatre on both the audience and the performers. However, the classical Sanskrit dramas gradually declined with the appearance of the Muslim rule in India. Despite this, the impact of Sanskrit theatre continued to shape the theatrical landscape of Asia.⁶² Indian classics epics like the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhasa's plays and Jataka tales acted as inspirations (Fig 3.6). They served as a source of creativity in shaping the growth of new theatrical expression all over Asia. As sectarian conflict increased in the Muslim world, Sufis turned to practical jokes and humorous stories as a way to resolve rival sects through laughter. This can be perceived in the works of Jalaluddin Rumi and Amir Khusru, who used comedy to promote understanding and acceptance of different spiritual beliefs.⁶³ The various Masnavis, comprising funny stories, have remained popular for eras.⁶⁴

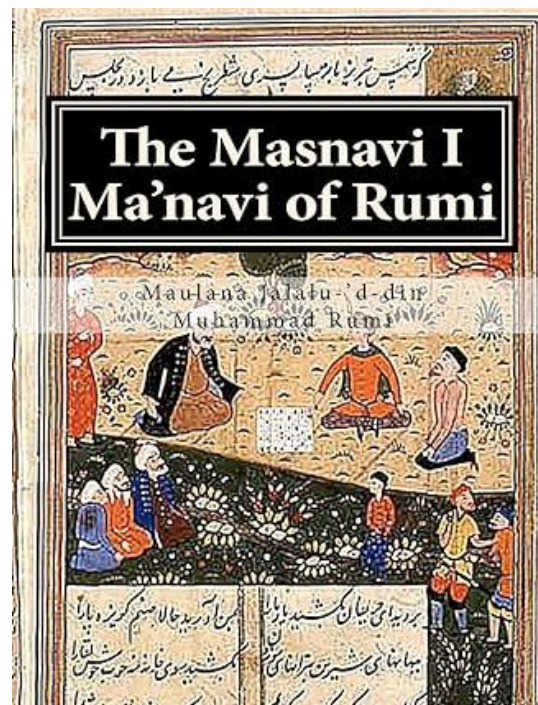


Fig 3. 6: The Masnavi I Ma'navi of Rumi.

Source: Amazon.com

https://m.media-amazon.com/images/I/815J1cm8sDL._SY425_.jpg. Accessed October 15, 2023.

Sufi humors in India used comedy to present Sufi thoughts, written in Hindi, Hindustani or Muslimani.⁶⁵ Sufi tradition provided a substitute interpretation to Indian folklore and history,

⁶² Joyashree Dey, "The Theatrical Traditions of India," *Medium*, July 2, 2023, <https://medium.com/@uptotheMoon/the-theatrical-traditions-of-india-d1bf836695>.

⁶³ Valerie J. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt* (University of South Carolina Press, 2023), Google Books.

⁶⁴ The Masnavi, or Masnavi-ye-Ma'navi, also written Mathnawi, or Mathnavi, is an extensive poem written in Persian by Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi, also known as Rumi.

⁶⁵ Nishat Zaidi and A. Sean Pue, *Literary Cultures and Digital Humanities in India* (Taylor & Francis, 2022), Google Books.

drawing upon natural wit and comedy. The Rubai was a poetic form of Sufi comedies composed in *chhand* or *Doha style*. It featured the divine love of the *faqir* and his chase of mystical experiences through stories of his everyday life. Popular themes were criticism of the Mullah, his teachings, and the social environments. Maqalat were discussions on numerous topics, often mocking the Mullah. This tradition continued during the reign of Muhammed Bin Tughlaq, adopting regional rulers' languages. Bhakti poetry was written in South India between 8th and 12th centuries, it is similar to Sufi poetry and was widespread among the masses for its simplicity and entertainment. Poets like Ramanujacharya, Chaitanya, and Surdas used slang and mixed languages, contributed to the movement.⁶⁶ Indian theater experienced a vibrant rebirth, with a diverse range of village comedy theaters developing in local languages to connect with audience directly. Whereas Sanskrit theater reserved a national charm due to its use in courts, temples and shrines, rural theater remained rooted within its own communities. This period witnessed a prospering theatrical practice across the subcontinent, with unique methods developing in various regions, reflecting the rich culture of India.⁶⁷

Later by 13th till 14th centuries, Sultanate of Delhi experienced a chaotic time and the Khalji dynasty ruled from 1290 until they were altered by the Tughluq dynasty around 1320. Despite the chaos, this period witnessed a significant cultural and artistic growth. The control of Delhi Sultanate on India lasted till 1526. Later during the same year first Battle of Panipat occurred which led to the foundation of Mughal rule in India.⁶⁸ As the outcome, Mughals ruled in India as one of the most ironic and lengthiest governing dynasties. They developed strong alliances with local communities, which led to substantial social, cultural, political, artistic, and linguistic interactions. In 1556, second battle of Panipat was fought which directed Mughal forces to rapidly take control of Agra and Delhi. Akbar entered Delhi victoriously, stayed for a month, and was declared emperor.⁶⁹ During his era, Akbar shifted capital to Lahore from Fatehpur Sikri. This premeditated move took him closer to the Afghan borderline which advanced his control over northwestern India. As a result, Lahore became a main hub for cultural and social activities correspondingly flourishing in architecture, art, and folklore. The tradition of literary comedy

⁶⁶ Rajeev Kumar, *The Quest of Kabir: Conscience as Poetry in Pre-Modern India*, 2021.

⁶⁷ Tobias Becker, "Entertaining the Empire: Theatrical Touring Companies and Amateur Dramatics in Colonial India," *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 03 (September 2021): 699–725, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X13000538>.

⁶⁸ Archana Subramanian, "Rise of an Empire," *The Hindu*, April 21, 2017, <https://www.thehindu.com/children/rise-of-an-empire/article18178670.ece>.

⁶⁹ "NCERT Notes: Akbar- Medieval Reign [Medieval History of India Notes for UPSC]," *BYJUS*, n.d., <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/akbar-1556-1605/>.

during his regime relates to one of Emperor Akbar's nine jewels i.e., Raja Birbal. He played a key role in emperor's court and was known for his witty tales, humorous jokes and satirical poetry which questioned the status quo (Fig 3.7). Ample stories and jokes about Birbal were inscribed which highlight his unique wit and humor about social and political issues. Whereas, this approach of comedy evolved into a separate genre in Urdu literature called *Latifi* and *Muzahiya*.⁷⁰



Fig 3. 7: Birbal Stories.

Source: "Birbal Stories (32 pp).", *Google Books.com.pk*,
https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=G5zqiW0Bd1YC&pg=PP2&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.
 Accessed October 14, 2023.

During the Sikh period from 1762 till 1849, the ritual of comedy was obvious in the works of traditional stories and daily communications among public. Sikh Gurus and scholars frequently used wit as a means to convey wisdom and insights about life. Sikh comedy is known for uplifting spirits with jokes that were clean and fun, without sarcasm or making fun of others. It often included irony and has the power to break illusions, teach people important lessons, and correct misguided behavior. Sikhs were less in number and oppressed by the Mughals during their rule, therefore they used comedy to deal with their difficulties and distract themselves. These jokes were known as Sardar jokes and are considered inoffensive fun.⁷¹

India was under the British rule since 1757 till its independence in 1947. They came to India and established The British East India Company with the intension to expand British influence through trade. The first trade took place in 1608 and since then they began to plan

⁷⁰ Neela Subramaniam, *Birbal Stories* (Sura Books, 2004), Google Books,
https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=G5zqiW0Bd1YC&pg=PP2&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.

⁷¹ Harijot Singh Khalsa, "Humor in Sikhi," *SikhNet*, May 23, 2014, <https://www.sikhnet.com/news/humor-sikhi>.

interchange posts along the coastline. Over the next era, the company progressively took control of Indian region and secured a substantial military triumph against the French at Plassey Battle, marking the start of British rule in India. In precolonial times, people used humor to criticize political and religious establishments, thus advocating a provisional escape from severe social, cultural and religious rules. During the colonial period, humor faced western posed cultural challenges and saw a surge in satirical writing and cartoons which targeted both the colonizers and the colonized, making comedy an influential tool for social and political commentary.⁷² Later in 1940, the Muslim League, under the headship of Muhammad Ali Jinnah approved the Lahore Resolution, for a separate nation for Muslims within united India (Fig 3.8). Consequently, among the Congress, Muslim League and the British government negotiations were held to regulate post-war constitution of India but unfortunately these discussions fell apart by reason of the incapability of Congress and the Muslim League to find mutual ground of their visions for the future of India. Thus, the British decided to let the public have their opinion through elections. The influence of Muslim League became prominent after the weakening of British rule during World War II, though the political power was held by Congress. Nevertheless, the British government confronted major challenges in reinstating their earlier control.⁷³

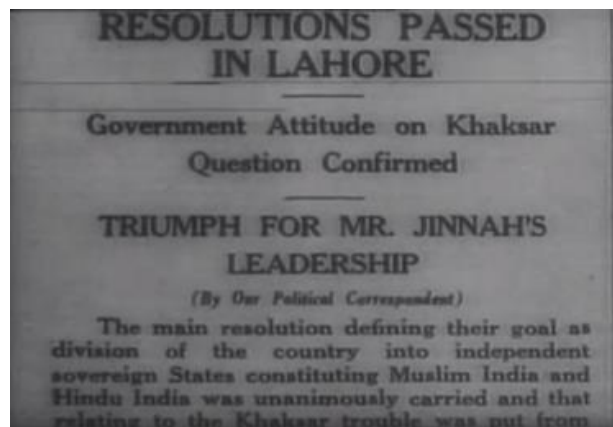


Fig 3. 8: 30 March 1940 Newspapers printed news about Lahore Resolution, demanding division of India.
Source: "Lahore Resolution News," *Wikimedia.org*,
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/e/e0/Lahore_Resolution_News_BurhanAhmed.png/375px-Lahore_Resolution_News_BurhanAhmed.png. Accessed October 14, 2023.

Later in 1947, partition of India resulted in the formation of two states, Pakistan and India (Fig 3.9) that influenced and affected cultural traditions. Survival of folk traditions required

⁷² Christina Oesterheld, "Humor and Satire: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 26 (n.d.).

⁷³ Atul Mishra, *The Sovereign Lives of India and Pakistan: Post-Partition Statehood in South Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2021), Google Books.

adaptation due to migration and mixing of societies. Efforts to preserve traditions drove Pakistani folk theater, whereas arrival of Muslims from India initially threatened folk forms, but decentralization and industrialization allowed folk theater to maintain cultural identity in changing times.⁷⁴ Furthermore, comedy in Pakistan evolved due to socio-political changes since its formation, slapstick comedy appealed to the newly arrived *Mohajirs*. However, the comedy in early Pakistan had its own narrative, reflecting unique experiences and perspectives.

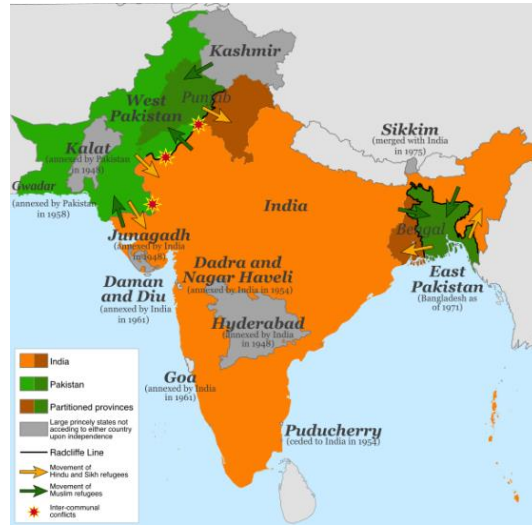


Fig 3. 9: Map of the partition of India (1947).

Source: "Partition_of_India_1947," *Wikipedia.org*,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Partition_of_India_1947_en.svg. Accessed October 14, 2023.

In this chapter the history of comedy in India was discussed advocating its continuing cultural worth and adaptableness. Comedy has aided as an influential tool for social and political commentary, since its roots in Sanskrit drama and folk traditions to its evolution over eras of political chaos and colonial regime. The varied forms of comedy, from verbal wit to slapstick humor highlight the richness of Indian cultural traditions and their capacity to imitate and adjust during shifting times. Comedy continued to evolve as India transitioned into the modern age and later witnessed the creation of Pakistan, reflecting the socio-political landscapes. In the next chapter, we will explore the overview of comedy in Pakistan, inspecting how socio-political changes shaped its narrative on the experiences and perspectives that have defined Pakistani humor.

⁷⁴ Davut Şahbaz, "The Two Nations Theory and Its Role in the Establishment of Pakistan," February 10, 2020, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1033923>.

CHAPTER 4

COMEDY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL SATIRE IN PAKISTAN

The history of comedy in Pakistan stretches back to prolonged years with a deep-rooted culture of clever wit that was predominant in the Indian ancient folk stories and Sanskrit dramas. This narrative form of storytelling developed the initial origins of laughter and humor in Pakistan. Urdu as Pakistan's national language finds its roots in the same form of storytelling. Urdu has an inherent beauty and rhythm, being a language of poets and scholars. An image of this is apparent in the drama, music, and comedy, where through the ages humor has been drawn out of the everyday lives of the people. Pakistani comedy has often targeted Indian political verdicts, while Indian comedy has likewise imitated on the Pakistani government's situations, which brilliantly satirize the Indo-Pak scenarios.⁷⁵ The 50s was the golden era for radio in Pakistan, it became the national public broadcaster facility for radio in Pakistan, primarily known as the Pakistan Broadcasting Service. The network provided news updates, music and entertainment (Fig 4.1). Radio Pakistan delivered a variety of facilities, including news and FM stations for music and entertainment. It became a popular source of entertainment before television, shows mostly focused on socio political comedy and incorporating dialogues from classical dramas and discussed the current situations of that time.



Fig 4. 1: Agha Nasir producing a play for Studio Number 9.
Source: "Flashback: Voices from the past," Dawn News,
<https://www.dawn.com/news/727097>. Accessed October 16, 2023.

According to Mcquail and Curran; Television and mass media are integral part of people's daily lives. Media gives tons of programs that have an impact on how things are perceived,

⁷⁵ Nabeeha Zahid Chaudhary, "Beyond the Drama: Developing Entertainment-Education Television Serials in Pakistan" (PDF, 2021), <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/29bcadd4-e512-4f8d-b119-0612912287b8/content>.

especially in politics. For instance, socio-political comedy shows can have an influence on politics and social issues.⁷⁶ At the time of partition, television was not available in Pakistan, however, the government quickly started planning for its introduction. They established a unique Boat-shaped or Quaid-e-Azam Model Wireless Broadcasting Station in Lahore, which sparked interest and fascination for television. Eventually, on November 26, 1964, television in Black & White and with effect was formally launched in Lahore, after that in Dhaka, Islamabad, and Karachi in the following years (Fig 4.2). The inauguration of television was done by President General Ayub Khan.⁷⁷ Chiefly television signals could only reach 10% of the country but within two years, its coverage expanded nationwide. As a result, television became progressively popular in Pakistan.

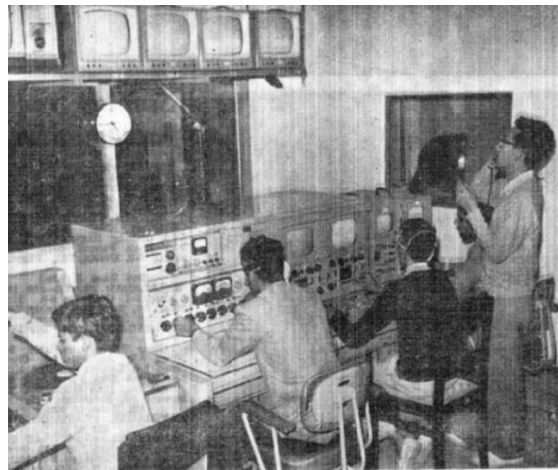


Fig 4. 2: Engineers of the Pilot Television station Lahore are busy making final checkup for his inauguration by President Mohammad Ayub Khan. Source: "50 years ago today: Pakistan launches first TV channel," *Dawn News*, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1147037>. Accessed October 16, 2023.

In 1965, TV series *Alif Noon* gained popularity among the audience (Fig 4.3). The story revolves around a resourceful and wily person named Allan, who tries all unethical ways to rapidly make money. He counts on *Nanha* to assist him in his tricks. *Allan* himself preferred to avoid working and instead played a passive role, while instructing *Nanha* about their deceitful plans. Thus, due to his newness with the difficulties of society, *Allan* used him as a front man for their tricks. Eventually, *Nanha* would unintentionally reveal the entire plan by speaking the truth to the public.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ M. McQuail and J. Curran, "Media and Power," *Media* 52, no. 4 (2002): 622–43, New York: Routledge Publications.

⁷⁷ Pervaiz Akhtar, "Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOIB), Pakistan," *Moib.gov.pk* (blog), 2021, <https://moib.gov.pk>.

⁷⁸ "Alif Noon." *DVD Planet Store*, <https://www.dvdplanetstore.pk/shop/drama/alif-noon/>.



Fig 4. 3: Alif Noon (1965).

Sources: “Alif Noon (1965) Comedy,” *Themoviedb.org*,
<https://www.themoviedb.org/tv/34822-alif-noon>. Accessed October 20, 2023.

In 1966, Khawaja Moinuddin, penned down a show *Taleem-e-Balighan*, under the direction of Agha Nasir (Fig 4.4). It was initially made for Radio Pakistan before transitioning to television. The story centered on a maulvi coaching students.⁷⁹ The students were welcomed from various families: one of them was a pickpocket, another a butcher, and the third a black-market trader. The essence of the show was based on three values by Quaid -e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: Unity, Faith, and Discipline. The show was infused with satire and was rich in humor.⁸⁰

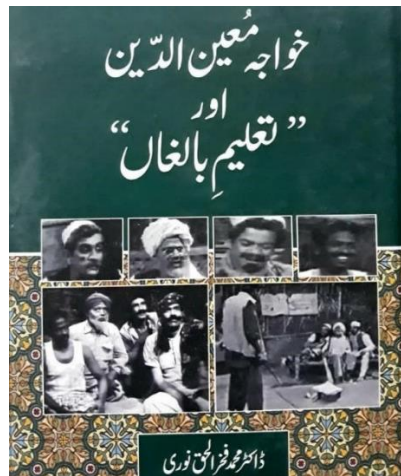


Fig 4. 4: Khwaja Moinuddin Aur Taleem-e-Balighan.

Source: “khwaja Moinuddin aur Taleem-e-Balighan,” *Pakbooks.com*,
<https://www.pakbooks.com/products/khwaja-moinuddin-aur-taleem-e-balighan>. Accessed October 20, 2023.

⁷⁹ Translation: Maulvi (Islamic religious mentor).

⁸⁰ Khan Reviews. “Mr. Khan’s Review on Sona Chandi (1982-3).” *Mr. Khan’s Reviews*, June 12, 2020.

One of the most widespread show, *Kasauti*, which was aired from Radio Pakistan Karachi in March 1968, remained on air with intermittent breaks, until 1976. It was a typical street trial where relationships and situations were put to the test. This was a classic comedy by scriptwriter Salahuddin, and the cast included Obaidullah Baig, Iftikhar Arif and Quraishpur's, three friends with exceptional minds teeming with questioning each other with 20 informative questions about any and every topic (Fig 4.5). This show was a satire on everyday life typical to a Karachiite. Ghazi Salahuddin with a hint of disillusionment in his words said;

“He thinks the same Kasauti would be obsolete today. People’s attention spans are much shorter. Their interests have moved on to sports, technology and fashion. If today a quiz show like Kasauti were to be produced, the questions would be different, as would be the audience.”⁸¹

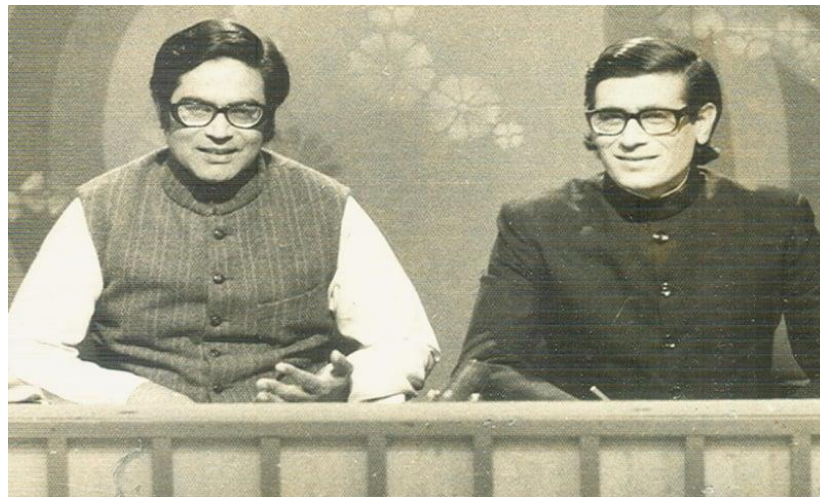


Fig 4. 5: Iftikhar Arif and Obaidullah Baig in Kasauti.
Source: “Flashback: the guessing game,” Dawn News,
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1766138>. Accessed October 21, 2023.

After the immense fame of *Kasauti*, numerous quiz shows started emerging from various centers of PTV. Among them were *Ikeesvan Sawaal*, a creation of journalist Hameed Shaikh; *Pehchaaniye*, where Aziz cartoonist showcased his drawing skills for the audience; *Lafz Ki Talaash*, a show reminiscent of Scrabble, hosted by Jahangir Azar; *Meezan* by Muhammad Idrees; and *Parakh* by Shoaib Hashmi (Fig 4.6).⁸² The influence of these comedy shows was massive as they were based on simple and true incidents of life, culture, and norms. Thus, these shows became extremely popular and created a hype among the audience as masses were able to connect with these shows in a genuine manner.

⁸¹ Farahnaz Zahidi Moazzam, “The Symbolic Death of Pakistan’s Mastermind,” *Dawn*, June 23, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/728913/the-symbolic-death-of-pakistans-mastermind>.

⁸² Muhammad Suhayb, “Flashback: The Guessing Game,” *Dawn*, July 23, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1766138>.

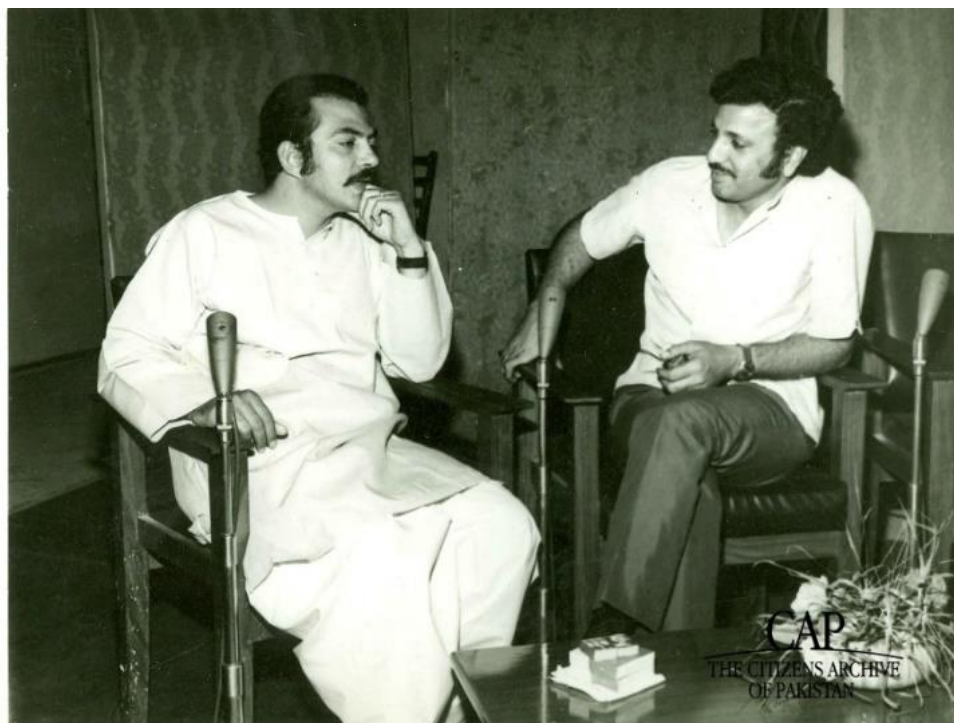


Fig 4. 6: Zaheer Bhatti in conversation with a young Shoaib Hashmi at PTV Lahore Studios. (1965-6).
Source: *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=900935733303457&set=this-picture-shows-zaheer-bhatti-in-conversation-with-a-young-shoaib-hashmi-at-p>. Accessed October 21, 2023.

Khuda ki Basti (1969) holds a momentous place in the records of Pakistani television as it is one of the earliest and extraordinary drama (Fig: 4.7).⁸³ This series presents a heretical story that sheds light on the persistent social and political issues of its time. Notably, *Khuda ki Basti* was aired twice, with its second broadcast in 1974 due to the ardent appeal of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This drama was also added in the courses of drama academies in India, and various areas within Europe.⁸⁴ In the review titled 'Flashback: *The mother of all serials*' by Raju Jamil, published on October 20, 2019, stated.

“Few Pakistani television serials have enjoyed the kind of iconic status that *Khuda Ki Basti* has, which has often also been dubbed ‘The Mother of All Serials.’ When it was telecast on Pakistan Television in 1974, it broke all records of popularity and took a firm hold on the entire nation —it was the first drama during which streets wore a deserted look during the time it was televised, as people huddled in homes to watch it. It became the center of every conversation due to its powerful plot about the early days of Pakistan and the perils of modern society with its story of social and sexual exploitation.”⁸⁵

⁸³ Translation: *Khuda ki Basti* (God's Own City).

⁸⁴ Bisma Ahmad, “Old but Not Forgotten: Top 10 Pakistani Dramas to Re-Watch Now,” *Dawn*, March 13, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1169324>.

⁸⁵ Raju Jamil, “Flashback: The Mother of All Serials,” *Dawn*, October 20, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1511859>.

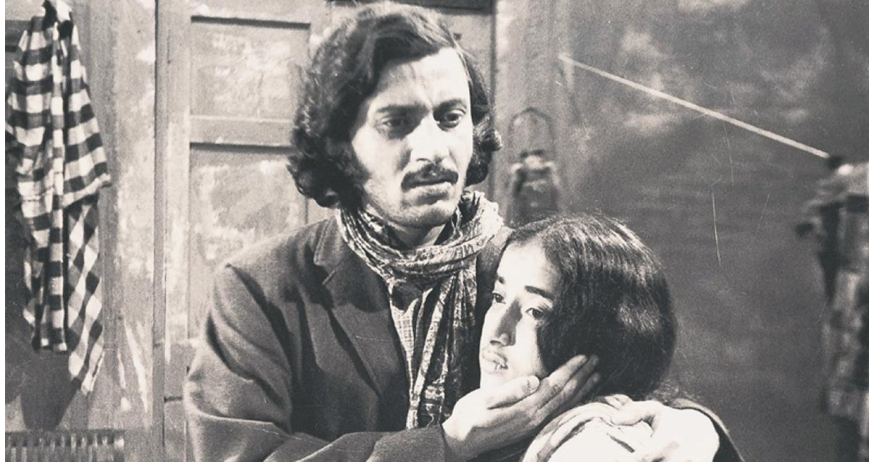


Fig 4. 7: Zafar Masud as Nosha with a co-star in *Khuda Ki Basti*.
Source: *Dawn.com*, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1169324>. Accessed October 22, 2023.

Zia Mohyeddin hosted the talk show *The Zia Mohyeddin Show* (1969 to 1973), which was known for its unique and witty segments, with a rap-style song introduced with his signature phrase, *Zara Theka lagaiye* (Fig 4.8).⁸⁶ Maqsood contributed to the show by writing last few episodes of the show. Their collaboration began through a shared interest in playing bridge. Maqsood recalled, “Zia was very amused by my casual banter at the bridge table, and asked me if I would pen down my words for his Zia Mohyeddin Show.”⁸⁷ An interview given to *Dawn*, Maqsood mentioned that writing scripts for the Zia Mohyeddin Show was one of his earliest assignments and he has been in showbusiness for 45 years since.⁸⁸



Fig 4. 8: 1st entry of Pakistan Comedian Moin Akhtar in PTV Zia Mohiuddin Show.
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-S4kKAg23E>. Accessed October 24, 2023.

⁸⁶ Translation: Zara Theka lagaiye (Get the rhythm going).

⁸⁷ “Anwar Maqsood,” *Pakpedia*, January 11, 2018, <https://www.pakpedia.pk/anwar-maqsood/>.

⁸⁸ Peerzada Salman, “Anwar Maqsood on Zia, Sadequain and Angioplasty,” *Dawn.com*, August 30, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/745773/anwar-maqsood-on-zia-sadequain-and-angioplasty>.

In the 1970s, a half-hour programs called *Such Gup* and *Taal Matol* were comedy shows which set the foundation for future generations to learn how to write sarcasm and bring it to life (Fig 4.9). In show *Such Gup*, Abbas Shafi and Hasnat Ahmed acted as two Punjabi-speaking imitators, while Salman Shahid was presented as the one always ready to share his stories of *do gainday*.⁸⁹ Abbas and Hasnat would chatter in English, which was like a fourth language to them.⁹⁰



Fig 4. 9: Shoaib Hashmi (C) with the team that produced *Such Gup* and *Taal Matol*
Source: Dawn.com, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1754192>. Accessed October 28, 2023.

In 1970, *Funony Latifay* is a comedy long play written by Maqsood and directed by Qasim Jalani (Fig 4.10).⁹¹ The long play is popular for its witty dialogues and humorous portrayal of a family gathering around lunch table, eagerly awaiting the arrival of guests. All over the play, the characters participate in a witty banter and exchange humorous remarks on each other. The play has several other settings and scenes of humorous comedy with a touch of political puns. Moreover, Maqsood also played a role in the play where he showcased his talent as both a writer and actor.⁹²



Fig 4. 10: *Fanony Latifay* by Anwar Maqsood comedy long play.
Source: Dailymotion.com, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8h7ect>. Accessed October 28, 2023.

⁸⁹ Translation: Do gainday (Two rhinos).

⁹⁰ Muhammad Suhayb, "In Memoriam: Farewell to *Such Gup*," *Dawn.com*, May 21, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1762332>.

⁹¹ Translation: *Fanony Latifay* (Funny jokes).

⁹² Doody Sami, "Fanony Latifay by Anwar Maqsood Comedy Long Play," *Dailymotion*, January 13, 2023, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8h7ect>.

In September 1972, a widespread television drama series called *Uncle Urfi* befall as a half-hour weekly comedy show. The show revolved around the character of Uncle Urfi, who was known for his friendly behavior and continuous smile (Fig 4.11). He would often wear old-fashioned bush shirts and play pranks. In his life, *Uncle Urfi* had three magical gnomes who would assist him in solving daily problems using modern devices. As the show proceeded, the emphasis shifted more towards these three gnomes, who established a special bond with Uncle Urfi. This show once again highlights the dominant role of Pakistan television in portraying social expression, imagination, and simplified plotlines, despite critics' claims of its commercialism being banal.⁹³



Fig 4. 11: Drama series Uncle Urfi 1972.

Source: *Thenews.com.pk*, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/455629-old-pakistani-tv-drama-uncle-urfi>, Accessed October 30, 2023.

Aik Sachi Chuk, a long play written by Maqsood in 1975, revolves around a family facing various socio-economic challenges in Pakistan.⁹⁴ The play was a combination of humor with emotional social commentary while also promoting important societal issues. *Aik Sachi Chuk* has left a lasting impression on Pakistani theater, reflecting Maqsood's talent for capturing the intricacies of human and contemporary society.

⁹³ Mushtaq A. Subhani, "Old Pakistani TV Drama *Uncle Urfi* Still Rules over a Million Hearts," *The News*, April 10, 2019, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/448252-old-pakistani-tv-drama-uncle-urfi-still-rules-over-a-million-hearts>.

⁹⁴ Translation: *Aik Sachi Chuk* (A true mistake).

A satire drama series by Ather Shah Khan titled *Intezar Farmaiye* which was premiered in 1975 was considered as the first television drama appearance for Moin Akhtar.⁹⁵ The show spanned over 16 to 17 episodes, gaining popularity and gathering significant appreciation from audiences due to humorous yet relatable occurrences drawn from real life (Fig 4.12).

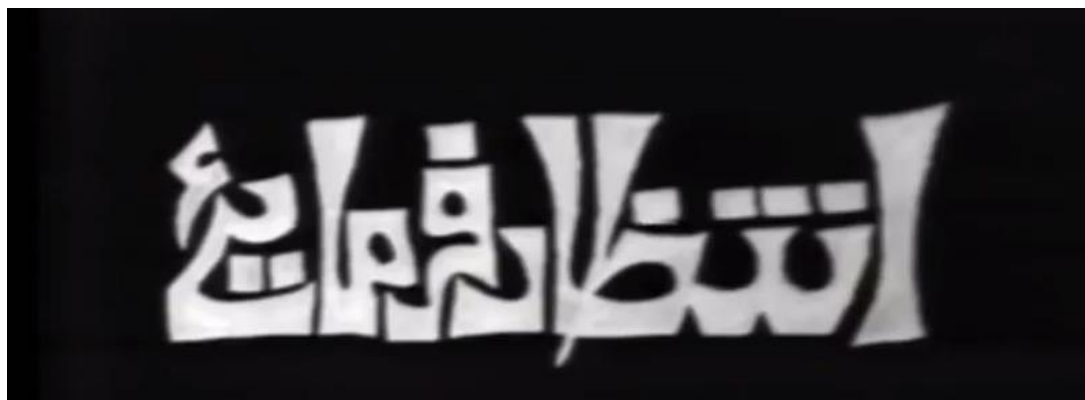


Fig 4. 12 : Intezar Farmaiye.

Source: Jaidinagar.com, <http://jaidinagar.com/drama-special>, Accessed October 30, 2023.

In 1978, a comic sketch show named *Fifty Fifty* was released (Fig 4.13). It was a revolutionary TV show in its day. Socio-Political satire was well included in the content of comedy.⁹⁶ This show mainly targeted Zia's military government, and despite heavy restriction, it was very effective in alluding to the hidden feelings of the population.⁹⁷ The show was inspired by a famous American comedy show named Saturday Night Live. *Fifty Fifty* grips a noteworthy place in the television history of Pakistan.⁹⁸ Its writers and actors were known for their devotion to imagination and nationalistic values, establishing the use of humor as a source to talk about socio-political issues in Pakistan. When asked about Anwar Maqsood's show *Fifty Fifty*, Irshad Ahmed Khan said.

"I personally believe that Fifty-Fifty is the artists' program. Not a writer's program, nor even a producer's, in that sense. It's entirely their show. Writers can only write but it's the artists who manipulate the idea, maneuver it and present it in a funny way."⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Translation: Intezar Farmaiye (Please Wait).

⁹⁶ Muhammad Riaz, Shahzad Ali, and Noman Ahmed Ansari, "Framing of Politicians in Pakistani Comedy TV Shows: An Analysis of Public Perception and Islamic Perspective," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2023): 87–97.

⁹⁷ Adil Najam, "Fifty-Fifty: The Best PTV Show Ever?," *At All Things Pakistan*, Web Archive, February 19, 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070219105838/http://www.allthingspakistan.com/2007/02/fifty-fifty-the-best-ptv-show-ever.html>.

⁹⁸ Khawaja Umer Farooq, "Fifty Fifty," *Inspiring Karachi*, August 1, 2013, <https://inspiringkarachi.wordpress.com/2013/08/01/fifty-fifty/>.

⁹⁹ Zeenat Hissam, "Why Fifty-Fifty Made Us Laugh," *Herald Magazine*, May 11, 2017, <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153750>.



Fig 4. 13: Fifty Fifty Tv show.

Source: Hamariweb.com, <https://enews.hamariweb.com/entertainment/why-old-ptv-dramas-still-capture-hearts-a-journey-into-the-past/>, Accessed October 30, 2023.

In 1980, another long play by Maqsood was performed, titled *Aik thi Safia*, a young girl named Safia and her life filled with unforeseen turns as she navigates through numerous challenges, social pressure and personal struggles. The play was not completely a comedy play instead it was more like an emotional reflection of life and society, thus, *Aik thi Safia* fascinated the audience with its emotional and thought-provoking storyline. Whereas, in the mid 1980's, *Amma* a television drama written by Maqsood was telecasted.¹⁰⁰ It is about the life of an elderly women and her interactions with her family members, neighbors and society. The drama explores both the comedy and emotional moments of her life, offering a picture of the difficulties of human relationship and aging.

Later on, September 18 1982, a sitcom drama serial named *Sona Chandi* of 38 episodes was aired from PTV Lahore center under the direction of Saleem Nasir (Fig 4.14). The series revolves around a newlywed couple belonging to a modest family who came to Lahore in quest of employment. While living in the city, they come across a varied array of individuals grappling with social and financial challenges and *Sona Chandi* endeavors to assist them. The drama is inspired by a real couple, *Sona* and *Chandi* hailing from Kallurkot, Pakistan.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Translation: Amma (Mother).

¹⁰¹ Khan Reviews, "Mr. Khan's Review on *Sona Chandi* (1982-3)," *Mr. Khan's Reviews*, June 12, 2020.

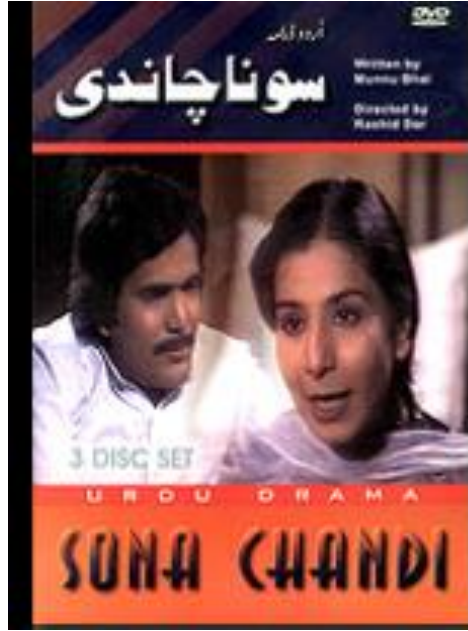


Fig 4. 14: Cover art of PTV drama Sona Chandi.

Source: *Wikipedia.org*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sonachandi.jpg>, Accessed November 1, 2023.

Dour e Janoon, a classic PTV show “Drama 83” was released in 1983, was written by Maqsood and was directed by Nisar Hussain. It talks about the poignant story of an elderly couple who faces loneliness in their later years.¹⁰² The genre of the drama is tragedy and tries to discover the sacrifices they have made for their children and for each other (Fig 4.15).¹⁰³



Fig 4. 15: Dour e Janoon PTV classic drama 83.

Source: *Dailymotion.com*,
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8p5s6c>, Accessed November 1, 2023.

¹⁰² Translation: Dour-e-Junoon (Period of Madness).

¹⁰³ Media Entertainment, “Dour E Janoon - PTV Classic Drama 83,” Posted 2024, Dailymotion, 1:24:32, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8p5s6c>.

A television show called *Aangan Terha*, premiered in 1984 and provided Maqsood new heights of admiration as a writer (Fig 4.16).¹⁰⁴ Notable actors like Shakeel, Bushra Ansari, Salim Nasir, Durdana Butt, Arshad Mehmood, Akhtar, and Lehri contributed with exceptional work, as a result the show stood out and became a remarkable comedy show that efficiently shed light on the daily struggles faced by a retired government official, smartly combining it with a touch of social commentary. The characters were accurately chosen, and their dialogues were full of cleverness and showcased the praiseworthy command over the Urdu language. Noteworthy, this 12-episode masterwork, is one of Maqsood's utmost works.¹⁰⁵



Fig 4. 16: Opening credit of the Pakistani television serial, *Aangan Terha*.
Source: Wikipedia.org, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Angan_tehra_opening_credit.jpg,
Accessed November 1, 2023.

PTV released a drama in 1985, named *Khawaja and Son* written by Atta ul Haq Qasmi. The show was of total 8 episodes, fascinating spectators with a catch and emotional story of a household led by Khawaja, his nine daughters, a son and a departed wife (Fig 4.17). The story was about the deep bond between father and son, aptly termed *Khawaja and Son*. The drama signifies the essence of Lahori family culture, social issues and their unbreakable bonds to tackle the difficulties. As the only brother, he passionately fulfils his responsibilities and divides the weight of his father while Khawaja aids as a guardian of heritage and is grounded in tradition.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Translation: *Aangan Terha* (Crooked Courtyard).

¹⁰⁵ Shafiq Ul Hasan Siddiqui, "Evolution of Pakistani Comedy TV Shows Part 1," *The Daily Eye*, July 29, 2021, <https://www.thedailyeye.com>.

¹⁰⁶ "Khawaja & Son PTV Old Drama," *Archive*, March 6, 2021, <https://www.archive.org>.



Fig 4. 17: Khawaja & Son.

Source: *Archive.org*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210306012114/https://ptvold.com/2018/05/khawaja-son-ptv-old.html>, Accessed November 1, 2023.

Chun Chunao is a comedic short play by Maqsood casting Akhtar and Ansari as a married couple, with Bushra's character being approached by Sheikh *Sahab*, a politician to encourage her to stand for elections (Fig 4.18). The play is filled with puns and wit. The characters demonstrate the details of the political world and the aspect of their relationship. Through clever dialogues and humorous situations, the play offers a statical look at politics, highlighting the issues of Pakistan through comedy. The ending gave a very beautiful and emotional message, expressing wishes for Pakistan's prosperity with phrase "*Pakistan zindabad*."¹⁰⁷ Maqsood's witty writing and sharp observations on politics and society contributed and made the play incredible and entertaining.



Fig 4. 18: Chun Chunao Cover.

Sources: *Dmcdn.net*, <https://s2.dmcdn.net/v/UZXin1ZmTQEy-m2UP/x1080>, Accessed November 1, 2023.

Showtime was a diversity program that was telecasted on PTV in 1986, the script and hosting was done by Maqsood (Fig 4.19). It contained skits, parody acts and interviews where

¹⁰⁷ Doody Sami, "Chun Chunao by Anwar Maqsood Short Play of Moin Akhtar & Bushra Ansari," Posted January 13, 2023, Dailymotion, 38:51, <https://dai.ly/x8h7fht>.

political, societal and global issues were addressed sarcastically with witty commentary. A special segment of the show was dedicated to Bushra Ansari where she played the role of a chef and cleverly conveyed jokes to criticize the political situation of Pakistan.¹⁰⁸

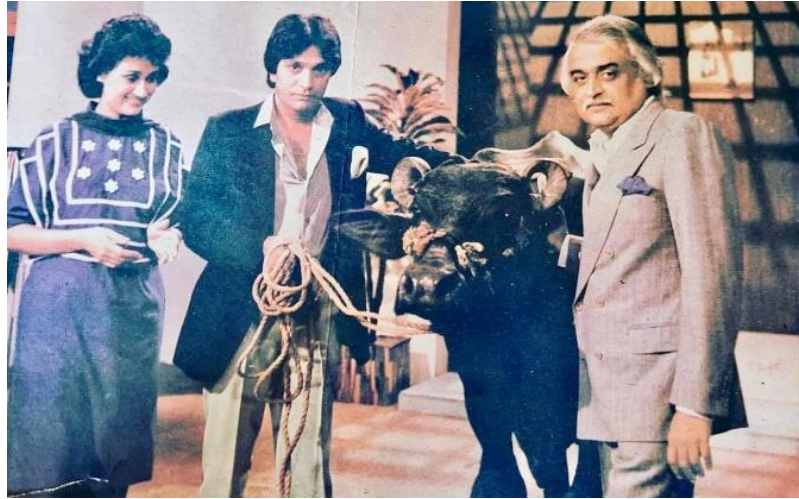


Fig 4. 19: PTV ShowTime 1986 Bushra Ansari, Moin Akhtar, Anwar Maqsood and real bhains (Buffalo) in studios.
Source: Facebook.com,
<https://www.facebook.com/VintagePakistan/photos/a.655299527883837/3782733945140364/?type=3>,
Accessed November 1, 2023.

Yeh Kahan Ki Dosti Hai, PTV classic long play was written by Maqsood in 1988 and starred, Huma Akbar, Rahat Kazmi, Zaheen Tahira who explore the political humor, social issues, and corruption, thus delivering a powerful message about how these negative aspects have affected the minds of young children (Fig 4.20).¹⁰⁹

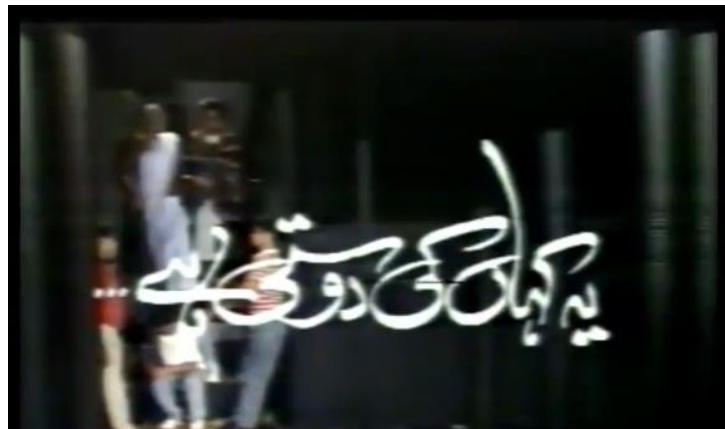


Fig 4. 20: *Yeh Kahan Ki Dosti Hai* PTV Classics Long Play.
Source: Dailymotion.com, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x89mkx6>, Accessed November 1, 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Tips International Media, "Showtime Talk Show Anwar Maqsood PTV Show," Posted October 28, 2020, YouTube, 7:57, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMTPuhbo0J0>.

¹⁰⁹ Translation: *Yeh Kahan Ki Dosti Hai* (What Kind of Friendship is This?).

Similarly, *Show Sha* in 1990, was telecasted on PTV, it was written and hosted by Maqsood whereas produced by Mohsin Ali (Fig 4.21). Ansari played various roles in the show such as a classical singer, housewife and cohost. The show revolved around social satire with exceptional delivery of comedic dialogues. It featured several more actors who did remarkable performances, among them was Neelofar Abbasi, who played the role of *Baho Begum*.¹¹⁰



Fig 4. 21: Ptv Comedy Programme Shoo Shaa.

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spvSy2eex98>, Accessed November 1, 2023.

In 1990, the television series *Rozi* reached massive popularity as the story circled around the tale of actor Moin Akhtar who untiringly endeavors to establish himself within the drama industry (Fig 4.22). His breakthrough chance occurred when an actress failed to convince the suitability for a precise character. Grasping the opportunity, Akhtar courageously takes up the appearance of a female character, eventually the role was given to him. Consequently, Akhtar, representing the role of Rozi, becomes a big hit. The storyline revolves around this incident; a struggling male actor camouflages as a female for a TV character, leading to roller coaster events in his personal life.¹¹¹ In a drama review about *Rozi*, Aisha mentions.

“It was basically an adaption of an American film called “Tootsie” (1982), but the drama gained popularity because of its blend of humor with seriousness and adaption of the movie into the context of Pakistani society. It was a drama with deep meaning and it mocked on society.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Jhankar Tv ke Geet, “Bushra Bashir PTV Comedy Programme Shoo Shaa Anwar Maqsood (Classical Singer),” Posted December 7, 2020, YouTube, 6:24, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AxLuEnysFk>.

¹¹¹ Mashal, “Old Drama Rozi,” *India Forums*, 2006, <https://www.indiaforums.com/forum/topic/53097>.

¹¹² Aisha, “Drama Review Rozi,” *Intro to TV Production*, November 13, 2012, <https://aisha402.wordpress.com/2012/11/13/assignment-drama-review-rozi/>.



Fig 4. 22: Drama serial Rozi (1990).

Source: *Themoviedb.org*, https://media.themoviedb.org/t/p/w300_and_h450_bestv2/qfXLGanmSnFqMDzLUPQ7tJUcv8p.jpg/, Accessed November 3, 2023.

In 1990, a renowned PTV long play *Half Plate*, written by Maqsood, featuring Akhtar Khalida Riyasat, Badar Khalil was released. The play was a classic masterpiece of laughter and satire (Fig 4.23).¹¹³



Fig 4. 23: Half Plate PTV Old Long Play Moin Akhtar and Anwar Maqsood.

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMyg3Rda--A>, Accessed November 3, 2023.

¹¹³ Pak Hub, "Half Plate PTV Old Long Play Moin Akhtar, Anwar Maqsood," *YouTube*, January 30, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMyg3Rda--A>.

Karim Sahib Ka Ghar is a comedy long play from 1990-1991, written by Maqsood and Qasim Jalali (Fig 4.24).¹¹⁴ It Features Maqsood himself along with Talat Husain, Shahida Moin, Amber Ayub, Jamshed Ansari and Aalia Shah. The play centered around a family where each member has their own secrets while trying to uncover each other's weaknesses. The husband was fond of classical music. He impulsively gifts his limousine to a signer as a gratitude for beautiful voice, but struggles to hide this from his dominating wife. Meanwhile, the wife's extravagant spending habits further strain their relationship. The play includes five other short plays, each exploring various social and cultural aspects of Pakistani life.¹¹⁵



Fig 4. 24: PTV Long Play Kareem Saheb Ka Ghar 1990.

Source: *i.ytimg.com*, https://i.ytimg.com/vi/_gWf4JXYh4M/mqdefault.jpg, Accessed November 3, 2023.

Nasri Ganey is a 90s comedy long play penned by Maqsood, the drama features Maqsood, Sajida, Behroz Sabzwari and Latif Kapadia in key roles (Fig 4.25).¹¹⁶ The play was about a middle-class family grappling with social issues, infused with a blend of satire. It offers a humorous yet insightful look into everyday challenges faced by an average Pakistani household.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Translation: Karim Sahib Ka Ghar (House of Mr. Karim)

¹¹⁵ Jalali, Qasim, Anwar Maqsood, *Karim Sahib Ka Ghar*, Shalimar Recording Co., 1990, <https://search.worldcat.org/title/karim-sahib-ka-ghar/oclc/56894386>.

¹¹⁶ Translation: Nasri Ganay (Written Songs).

¹¹⁷ Lucky Sam, "Nasri Ganey PTV Best Ever Classic Comedy Long Play," *YouTube*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8UFUXNvM4M>.



Fig 4. 25:Nasri Ganay - PTV Long Play.

Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x837mdv>, Accessed November 3, 2023.

In 1981, Maqsood hosted and wrote two stage shows titled *Silver Jubilee* and in 1991, *Studio Dhai* was telecasted with Moin Akhtar and several other stars (Fig 4.26).¹¹⁸ Both the stage shows creatively added humor to various social and current affairs in Pakistan. They were performed in front of live audiences and was highly appreciated.¹¹⁹



Fig 4. 26: Silver Jubilee and Studio Dhai.

Sources: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5dsffc>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lic3AIWAHVI>, Accessed November 3, 2023.

The Benjamin Sisters, who were trained as pop singers, experienced a brief period of fame through Maqsood's weekly TV stage show, *Silver Jubilee* (Fig 4.27).¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ PTV Entertainment, "Silver Jubilee M. Ali, Zeba, Moin Akhter 1983," *YouTube*, November 1, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lic3AIWAHVI>.

¹¹⁹ Asif Shams, "Moin Akhtar & Anwar Maqsood Studio 2-1-2 Dhai Vol 1," *Dailymotion*, March 3, 2017, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5dsffc>.

¹²⁰ Nadeem F. Paracha, "Pakistani Pop Music: A Visual History," *NayaDaur*, October 23, 2018, <https://nayadaur.tv/23-Oct-2018/pakistani-pop-music-a-visual-history>.



Fig 4. 27: The Bengamin Sisters, pop singers on Maqsood's weekly TV stage show Silver Jubilee.
Source: *Nayadaur.tv*, <https://nayadaur.tv/23-Oct-2018/pakistani-pop-music-a-visual-history>, Accessed November 3, 2023.

Studio Pone Teen was also an iconic stage show, hosted by Maqsood.¹²¹ The show was well-known for its sharp social satire and incomparable comedy, reflecting on socio-political scenery of Pakistan during 1980s. Like Maqsood's other stage shows it was also performed Infront of live audiences. Maqsood's witty writings, clever wordplay and incisive observation about contemporary issues, was the backbone of the show. The popularity of this stage show is a testimony to the extraordinary talent and originality in writings of Maqsood, strengthening its place in history of Pakistan television (Fig 4.28).¹²²



Fig 4. 28: Studio pone teen.
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQsAd5iuLOM>, Accessed November 5, 2023.

¹²¹ Translation: Studio Pone Teen (Quarter to Three).

¹²² My The Best Music, "Moin Akhtar & Anwar Maqsood Studio Pone Teen International Jhoote," Posted March 4, 2017, YouTube, 39:53, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQsAd5iuLOM>.

Chaar Bees is a television show written by Maqsood. The title *Chaar Bees*, hints at themes of fraud and scam, reflecting the show's focus on corruption and dishonesty within society. The show blends humor with pointed commentary on socio-political landscape of Pakistan. Maqsood's writings can be measured by crafty dialogue and keen observations, creating a relevant and stimulating depiction of societal issues (Fig 4.29).¹²³



Fig 4. 29: Chaar bees 420 Anwar Maqsood.

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Giou4RWjXN0>, Accessed November 5, 2023.

In 1992, *Naadan Nadia* a show written by Maqsood was aired on (PTV) Pakistan Television (Fig 4.30). It wasn't just another TV drama but became a cherished part of Pakistani television culture. Maqsood with all his heart wrote and directed its story. The storyline was about an appealing young woman named Nadia, a simple character from a middle-class family and who sticks by her principles and morals. The drama shows ups and downs of her life. The spectators saw the unambiguous difference between her innocence and the difficulties of the world. Maqsood's writing filled the show with wit, comedy, and a keen eye for social observation. It was a mirror reflecting the problems and struggles of Pakistani society, from class differences to gender roles, the show undertook them all.¹²⁴

¹²³ Tips International Media, "Chaar Bees 420 Anwar Maqsood," Posted August 18, 2020, *YouTube*, 4:11, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Giou4RWjXN0>.

¹²⁴ "Nadan Nadia," *DVD Planet Store*, 1992, <https://www.dvdplanetstore.pk/shop/drama/nadan-nadia/>.

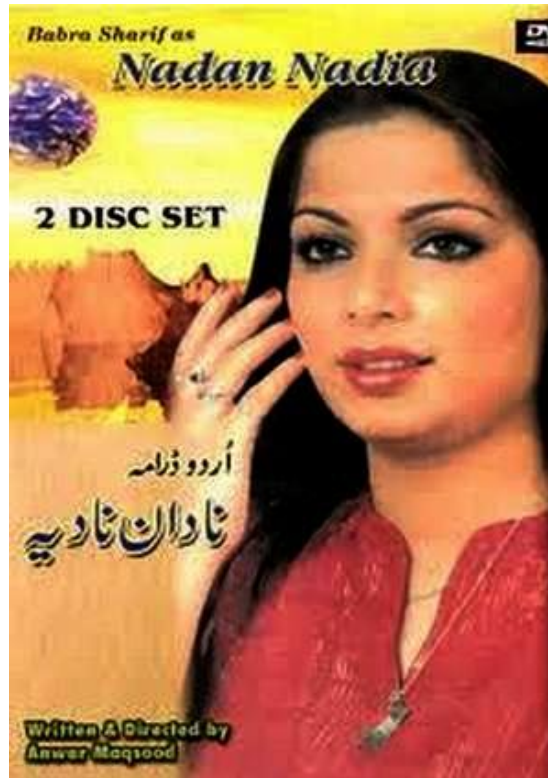


Fig 4. 30: Nadan Nadia, 1992.

Source: *Dvdplanetstore.pk*, <https://www.dvdplanetstore.pk/shop/drama/nadan-nadia/>, Accessed November 3, 2023.

Ainak Wala Jinn was a famous children's comedy TV show which was telecasted in 1993 to 1996 on PTV channel. The storyline circles around an evil *jinni* who masks himself as a numerous character to catch children's and audience attention. He attempts to make disorder however a good *jinni*, undertakes all the issues. Beside these two genies, there were other additional characters. Each character delivers a special message to children and their parents. It was one of the most watched and memorable show in the history of children's entertainment. Due to its humor and popularity this show was rebroadcasted in 2005 till 2008 (Fig 4.31). During an announcement of *Aniak Wala jinn*, Shahzad Qaisar, who played the main lead in the first part of the show, remarked.

"We will start the series from where its first part ended. The drama series is being started again to provide fun in a healthy atmosphere to people belonging to all age groups including children, women and men."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ "The Return of Ainak Wala Jin," *The Express Tribune* (blog), August 29, 2012, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/427879/the-return-of-ainak-wala-jin/>.



Fig 4. 31: Ainak Wala Jin Poster, 1993.

Source: *Dawn.com*, <https://www.dawn.com/news/745450/ainak-wala-jin-returns-on-ptv-screen-soon>, Accessed November 5, 2023.

Zard Dopher, another Pakistani television drama series comprising of fourteen episodes was aired on Pakistan television (PTV) in 1995.¹²⁶ The script was primarily penned down in 1993, but because of restrictions by government of that time, the drama faced difficulties in broadcasting but eventually premiered after two years. The plot revolves around a Lahore residence of a middle-class family of politician background.¹²⁷ The main lead character portrayed the prime minister of that time, and this marked an important period in television history as political issues were amenably spoken through dramas.¹²⁸

In 1997, Pakistani comedy show *Janjal Pura* was telecasted on Pakistan Television corporation, showcasing a small town of Lahore with people of different occupations living together and competing with one another (Fig 4.32). Respectively, each character struggles to improve their own standing in the town. In spite of their continuous competition and differences, the citizens come together to defend their people when opposed with an external threat. The drama

¹²⁶ Translation: Zard Dophehar (The Yellow Afternoon).

¹²⁷ Walter Armbrust, ed., *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond* (University of California Press, 2000), <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft8k4008kx/>.

¹²⁸ Carolyn A. Lin and Diana I. Ríos, eds., *Television Dramas and the Global Village: Storytelling through Race and Gender* (United States: Lexington Books, 2021), https://www.google.com.pk/books/edition/Television_Dramas_and_the_Global_Village/crpHEAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0.

also humorously showcases the political activities at the grassroots level in Pakistan in addition this program was a pioneer in representing the lives of transgender on television in Pakistan.¹²⁹



Fig 4. 32: Janjal Pura (1997-98).

Source: *Web Archive*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210416161926/https://www.ptvold.com/2018/07/janjal-pura-drama-ptv-old.html>, Accessed November 8, 2023.

Additional, *Family Front* a sitcom show of 1997, directed by Younas Butt became a hit in the following year (Fig 4.33). The drama casted classic actors including, Saba Hameed, Rauf Lala, Qazi Wajid and many more. Due to the storyline and cast, *Family Front* was appreciated and gained a huge fan base.¹³⁰ This show was about a household of five where children humorously try to keep their mischief hidden from their strict father.



Fig 4. 33: Family Front, 1997.

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhZYtDALsuE>, Accessed November 8, 2023.

¹²⁹ “Janjal Pura PTV Old Drama,” *Web Archive* (Internet Archive Wayback Machine, April 16, 2021), <https://web.archive.org/web/20210416161926/https://www.ptvold.com/2018/07/janjal-pura-drama-ptv-old.html>.

¹³⁰ Zoya Anwer, “6 Pakistani Comedy Shows That Need to Make a Comeback,” *Dawn*, May 29, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1184967>.

An Urdu Pakistani drama titled *Alpha Bravo Charlie*, falls under the categories of comedy, action and triller was produced by ISPR in 1997 and was aired in 1998 (Fig 4.34). It showed a partly different cast, blends elements of romance and satire while depicting the operative engagements of Pakistani Army in war and conflict.¹³¹



Fig 4. 34: Alpha Bravo Charlie title.

Source: Wikipedia.org, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alpha_Bravo_Charlie_title.jpg, Accessed November 8,2023.

Kollege Jeans filmed at National College of Arts Lahore was telecasted on February 19, 1999. It was a sitcom which gave a glimpse into the lively and chaotic life of university students, portraying their ups and downs, friendships, and experiences that define a student's journey (Fig 4.35).



Fig 4. 35: Kollege Jeans by Syed Nini.

Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ouCKDuepsU>, Accessed November 8,2023.

¹³¹ “Alpha Bravo Charlie,” *Pakistan Fandom*, accessed November 8, 2023, https://pakistan.fandom.com/wiki/Alpha_Bravo_Charlie.

Shashlik is a Pakistani comedy drama sitcom written by Sarmad Khoosat and directed by Jawad Bashir. It was aired on PTV from year 2001 to 2002 (Fig 4.36). The plot centers a less manly character, and his interactions with his female cousin. The sitcom also features several situational songs, adding a unique charm.



Fig 4. 36: Shashlick Comedy Drama 2002.

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=sreJFLnzvJw>, Accessed November 8, 2023.

During an era where social and political subtleties were on peak, there arose a groundbreaking show called *Loose Talk*, which was aired in 2002 and was written by Maqsood. Noteworthy, Maqsood was the host of the show with Moin Akhtar (Fig 4.37). The show offered an audacious and forthright commentary infused with humor on socio-political issues. Akhtar repeatedly seemed as a guest and mimicking many characters like Manmohan Singh, a harmonium player and single mother. Bushara Ansari was also casted for few episodes. Essentially loose talk, marked a momentous breakthrough in entertainment industry of Pakistan, heralding a new age of socio-political comedy that reverberate intensely with spectators, artists and writers to involve boldly in commentary on socio political affairs.¹³²

¹³² Kumail, "Lovely Loose Talk," *Media Policy Project*, December 13, 2020, <https://www.mediapolicyproject.com/post/lovely-loose-talk>.



Fig 4. 37: Loose Talk.

Source: *Archive*, Ary Digital Tv, <https://arydigital.tv/watch-loose-talk>, Accessed November 11, 2023.

In 2009 a popular Pakistani family situation comedy show, *Bulbulay*, was aired that revolves around an unusual Pakistani family of four (4.38).¹³³ The sequence beheld an extensive acknowledgement in the country as it holds the distinction of being the lengthiest running television program of Pakistan. As of May 2024, a second season of *Bulbulay* was aired with total of 250 plus episodes.¹³⁴



Fig 4. 38: Bulbulay Title.

Source: *Wikipedia.org*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulbulay#/media/File:Bulbulay_title.jpg, Accessed November 14, 2023.

Pawney 14 August is a one-act play staged in 2012 and was written by Maqsood. It was a thought-provoking story that shows the vision of Pakistan's founders with the country's present reality (Fig 3.39). The story revolves around imaginative figures of founders of Pakistan, who

¹³³ Translation: Bulbulay (Bubbles).

¹³⁴ Maisooma Batool, "Here's the Complete Story behind the Curious Case of Bulbulay Airing on BOL, Instead of ARY," *Galaxy Lollywood*, May 10, 2019, <https://www.galaxylollywood.com/2019/05/10/heres-the-complete-story-behind-the-curious-case-of-bulbulay-airing-on-bol-instead-of-ary/>.

came back to see the condition of Pakistan, are filled with questions, inquisitiveness with a touch of comedy. The play had a wide range of other characters representing various aspects of Pakistani society, including politics, military, and the film industry, giving an appealing theatrical experience.¹³⁵

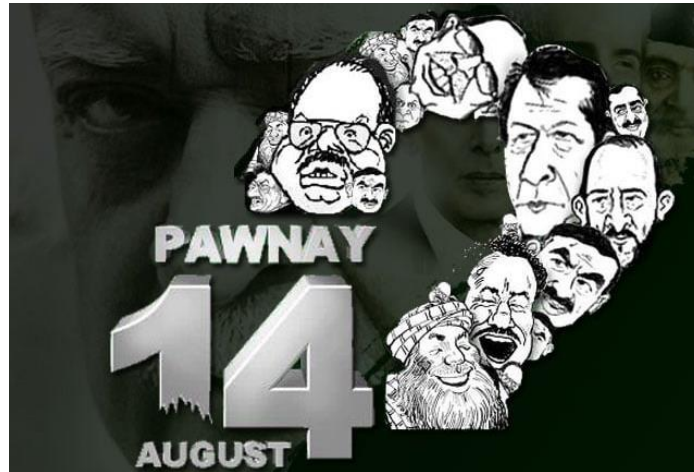


Fig 4. 39: Pawney 14 August.

Source: *Tribune.com.pk*, <https://tribune.com.pk/article/10880/pawney-14-august-silence-for-brilliance>, Accessed November 15, 2023.

A year later, after *Pawney 14 August* in 2013 Maqsood wrote another 90-minute one act stage play titled, *Sawa 14 August* (Fig 4.40). The play offered a one-sided and generalized opinion of more than forty years of Pakistan history. The play succeeded to address closely every issue Pakistan experienced, including drones, the Pakistan political governance, PIA, railways and the treatment of minorities.¹³⁶



Fig 4. 40: Sawa 14 August.

Source: *Brandsynario.com*, <https://www.brandsynario.com/sawa-14-august-to-be-powered-by-nokia/>, Accessed November 15, 2023.

¹³⁵ Amna R. Ali, "Theatre Review: Pawney 14 August," *News Line*, 2012, <https://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/theatre-review-pawney-14-august/>.

¹³⁶ Umar Waqas and Zehra Abid, "Sawa 14 August and Delusions of the Past," *The Express Tribune* (blog), August 23, 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/594199/sawa-14-august-and-delusions-of-the-past>.

Anwar Maqsood ka Dharna is a comedy play from 2014 written by Maqsood. The play story sets in contradiction of the background of the Pakistan's current political uncertainty.¹³⁷ The play highlights the uncertain nature of the situation, accusations against the democratic system, through *dharneys* (Fig 4.41).¹³⁸



Fig 4. 41: Anwar Maqsood Ka Dharna.

Source: *Facebook.com*, https://scontent.fmux1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t39.30808-6/302183972_406714831578424_8125347428397887088_n.jpg, Accessed November 15, 2023.

Siachen was a humorous play from 2015 by Maqsood. The play pays tribute to Pakistani soldiers posted on the Siachen Glacier (Fig 4.42). The play was about a conflict with India over the Siachen region which began in the 1980s when both countries upheld a military occurrence. The act was full with witty one liners and humorous interactions amongst characters. In spite of the humor, the play displayed the psychological, emotional and physical hardships of fighting in such tough conditions.¹³⁹



Fig 4. 42: Anwar Maqsood's new play *Siachen* is cold as ice, warm as blood
Source: *Dawn.com*, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1174563>, Accessed November 15, 2023.

¹³⁷ Translation: Anwar Maqsood ka Dharna ((Anwar Maqsood's Protest).

¹³⁸ Translation: Dharneys (Protests).

¹³⁹ Peerzada Salman, "Anwar Maqsood's New Play *Siachen* Is Cold as Ice, Warm as Blood," *Images*, January 2, 2016, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1174563>.

A satirical socio-political play *Saadhay 14 August*, penned by Maqsood and released in 2022, highlights the discussion among two fundamental figures of the Indian independence movement, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi (Fig 4.43). The play was first acted on 75th independence anniversary of Pakistan, it explores into the actions leading to the creation of India and Pakistan. It gained widespread praise from audiences. *Saadhay 14 August* was the final part of series *Pawnay 14 August* and *Sawa 14 August*. In an interview with Arab News Maqsood said.

“I didn’t write ‘14 August’ because Independence Day never came for me after August 14, 1947. People do not really understand what independence truly means and I have tried to convey it in the play.”¹⁴⁰



Fig 4. 43: Actors Khizr Ansari (left) plays the Chief Minister of an Indian state, Bihar, and Omar Kazi plays Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in *Saadhay 14 August* in Karachi, Pakistan, on August 16, 2022
Source: *Arab News*, <https://arab.news/rh9ue>, Accessed November 17, 2023.

This chapter covers socio-political comedy shows from the era of radio in Pakistan and traces their evolution toward television and stage plays. It explores the diversity of topics over time and the social and political issues addressed in these shows through satire. Socio-political comedy in Pakistan has observed a noteworthy revolution with the beginning of shows like, *Fifty Fifty* and *Loose Talk*. This production characterized by sharp satire and wit not only charmed audiences but also acted as a strong material by setting norms for political and cultural dynamics. Maqsood’s commitment to deliver authenticity and fearlessness in talking about contentious subjects set a trend for future endeavors in social political comedy. His production has left a farfetched mark on Pakistani society, signaling the future entertainment industry were humor and critique cross harmoniously.

¹⁴⁰ Buraq Shabbir, “In *Saadhay 14 August* Pakistani Playwright Anwar Maqsood Brings Heroes of Independence to Life,” *Arab News PK*, August 17, 2022, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2144801/pakistan>.

CHAPTER 5

THE MULTI-FACETED SOCIO-POLITICAL ENDEAVORS OF ANWAR MAQSOOD

In the previous chapter, an overview of comedy in Pakistan concluded that socio-political comedy became significant after partition in television and drama. In the socio-political comedy genre, Maqsood's contributions are largely evident, as the previous chapter intensively discussed much of his prominent work that included TV shows and plays that led to the growth and expansion of socio-political comedy in Pakistan. This chapter will discourse further works by Maqsood related to socio-political comedy encompassing his contributions including paintings, exhibitions, live shows, seminars, festivals and his roles as a host and a guest.

5.1 Visual Artist/Painter

Maqsood who is known for his writings is also an exceptional painter. His motivation and passion for painting developed at a young age, when he started to draw scenes of his own house situations on walls with charcoal. He professionally started painting in 1958 and a year later in 1959 he had his first solo exhibition at the French Embassy, showcasing 40 pieces of his artwork with Jamshed Marker buying 35 of them. His first exhibition earned him a National Award along with Ahmed Parvez and Lubna Agha. He has 7 to 8 solo exhibitions to his credit both within Pakistan and abroad.¹⁴¹

Maqsood is known to capture his observations of people and surroundings on canvas, using a colorful palette to express himself and is highly popular among art collectors (Fig 5.1).¹⁴² In an interview given to Art TV Pakistan he mentioned.

“I mostly used to paint birds and cages, with the birds dominating the scenes. Some birds are outside the cages, and some of the cages are broken, with torn bars. In my paintings, these birds also represent girls, as both birds and girls have a tendency to fly away.”¹⁴³

Refereeing to his paintings and describing the life of a person in Pakistan, Maqsood added,

“Most of my birds in my painting are outside of the cage. At least they have space to live. It is better for the people of Pakistan to be inside the cage; due to the problems in Pakistan. Who are in jail,

¹⁴¹ Adil Ahmad, “Anwar Maqsood the King of Caustic Wit,” *Indpaedia*, http://indpaedia.com/ind/index.php/Anwar_Maqsood_artist.

¹⁴² Unicorn Gallery, “Anwar Maqsood,” *Facebook*, July 9, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10157862810628167&id=203185668166&set=a.442161458166>.

¹⁴³ Art TV, “Anwar Maqsood Exclusive Interview for Art TV Pakistan,” Posted June 27, 2020, YouTube, 16:26, https://youtu.be/fDsYrp2NJg8?si=IYIHQF3_loe8QUZo.

they are safe, nobody can harm them, they don't get robbed, and gets three-time food daily. But the one who is outside of the jail, he is in worries. So, when the situations are of that kind then I paint Birds of cages (Fig).”¹⁴⁴



Fig 5. 1: Anwar Maqsood, 18 x 36-inch, acrylic on canvas, pigeon painting
Source: *Artciti.com*, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/anwar-maqsood-painting/anwar-maqsood-pigeon-painting-ac-awm-040>, Accessed November 20, 2023.

In December 1967, the Art Council of Pakistan Karachi hosted the Annual Exhibition of Paintings by Karachi Artists. This was the sixth Annual exhibition organized by the Arts Council, where 76 artists from Karachi submitted 192 of their works, including Maqsood. The exhibition was divided into two sections, Realistic and Contemporary artworks. A panel of judges, encompassing Mr. Mumtaz Hasan, Dr. Salimuzzaman Siddiqui, and Syed Amjad Ali selected the paintings for exhibition and selected the prize winner entries. Maqsood submitted a contemporary painting for the exhibition (Fig 5.2).

¹⁴⁴ Art TV, “Anwar Maqsood Exclusive Interview for Art TV Pakistan,” Posted June 27, 2020, YouTube, 16:26, https://youtu.be/fDsYrp2NJg8?si=IYIHQF3_loe8QUZo.

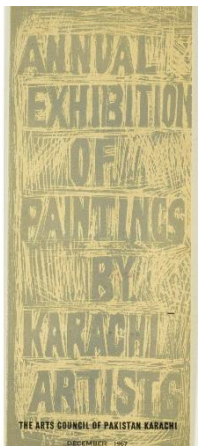
	This is the fifth Annual Exhibition of Paintings by Karachi Artists organized by the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi. For this exhibition 76 artists in Karachi drew and in 100 of their works. The exhibition consists of two Sections: REALISTIC and CONTEMPORARY. Each artist has been given a special award for his best work in each section, award over a prize of Rs. 100/-, a special prize of Rs. 500/- and a special prize of Rs. 200/-, He was awarded in the UNITED ARTISTS who have donated each prize. A panel of judges comprising Mr. Mustafa, Hameed, Dr. Sahazamun Siddiqui and Syed Asad Ali selected the paintings for display and awarded prize-winning entries. The following are the prize-winning entries as recommended unanimously by the panel of judges:		
	CONTEMPORARY SECTION First Prize "Painting No. 221" Muzar Aye (Rs. 500/-) Second Prize "Image" Mubashir Azim (Rs. 300/-) Third Prize "Garage-Shed" Rashid Ahmed (Rs. 200/-) Honourable Mention (on each print) "House" Mubashir Azim "Village man" Suleman Naji	REALISTIC SECTION First Prize "Village Man" Nafis Iqbal (Rs. 500/-) Second Prize "Lush Dancer" Afshar Zafar (Rs. 300/-) Third Prize "Paradise Point" O. Mustafa (Rs. 200/-) Honourable Mention (on each print) "Beauty of Kufistan" M. D. Tahir "Moonlight In Sea" Shama	
	LIST OF PAINTINGS REALISTIC Abdul Hakeem Khaliq Oil 100.00 1. Empress Market Oil 100.00 2. Towards Home Water Colour 150.00 3. Memory " 150.00 Afshar Husein Qureshi Paint 400.00 4. The Last Journey Oil 250.00 5. Way to Kaphan Oil 250.00 Afshar Zafar Water Colour N.F.S. 6. "1947" Oil 1,200.00 7. Lush Dancer Oil 1,200.00 Asmat Ali Khan Oil 300.00 8. The House Oil 300.00 C. Mustafa Oil 800.00 9. Hawks Bay Oil 800.00 10. Paradise Point Oil 800.00 Chuliam Mustafa Farooqi Oil 800.00 11. Agency of Van-Nam " N.F.S. Jeem Azam " N.F.S. 12. Poppy " N.F.S. Khurshid Zaman Oil 400.00 13. Mother and Child Tempera N.F.S. Madad Ali Oil 400.00 14. Twelve Noon Oil N.F.S. Maghool Nawab Oil 400.00 15. Thirty " 400.00 Majhar Husein Oil 400.00 16. Flower Power " 400.00 Mashar Hayat Noon Water Colour N.F.S. 17. "Hill" " 400.00 Mirza Masih Baig Oil 200.00 18. Think for tomorrow " 200.00 Mirza W. M. Oil 750.00 19. The Dal Lake Tempera 1,000 Muhammad Akram Oil 350.00 20. Tree " 350.00 Muhammad Manzoor Oil 350.00 21. "Honey" " 350.00 Muhammad Saif Oil 350.00 22. Little Sketch of a Baby " N.F.S.	Mubarak Hussain Oil 1,000.00 23. Abstraction Oil 2,000.00 24. Memory Jerry " 2,000.00 25. Boats " 2,000.00 Nafis Iqbal Oil 800.00 26. Village Maid Oil 150.00 27. After Rain " N.F.S. 28. Kachan " N.F.S. Saeed Ahmad Oil 250.00 29. Boots in Evening " N.F.S. Sajjad Husein Oil 3,000.00 30. President Ayub Khan " N.F.S. 31. General Yahya Khan " 3,000.00 Shama Oil 800.00 32. "War Scene" " 800.00 33. Moonlight in Sea " 800.00 Suleman Naji Oil 400.00 34. Portrait of a young Lady " N.F.S. Tahir M. D. Oil 400.00 35. Beauty of Kufistan Oil 400.00 Tanveer Shams Oil 200.00 36. Memory After Snow Tempera 200.00 Wali Mirza Oil N.F.S. 37. Preparing for a Race " N.F.S. 38. Shepherd " N.F.S.	CONTEMPORARY Afshar Ahmad Khan Oil 350.00 39. Chauraha Oil 350.00 All Iqbal Oil 750.00 40. Artist and Model No. 1 " 750.00 41. Artist and Model No. 2 " 750.00 Almas S. Oil 500.00 42. Behind the Scene " 500.00 43. On the Lake " 400.00 Anil Zafar Mohsin Water Colour 1,150.00 44. Prisoner " 1,150.00 Amir Shahid Oil 200.00 45. Refugee " 200.00 Anisa Ahmed Water Colour 250.00 46. A Sad Girl " 250.00 Ajman Saeed Oil 200.00 47. Innocence " 200.00 Anwar Maqsood Oil 400.00 48. Painting " 400.00 Bakht Anwar " 200.00 49. Prisoner " 200.00 Bakht Mirza " 1,000.00 50. Nadia Bitch " N.F.S. 51. Painting No. 67 " N.F.S. Hajira Zubairi Oil 350.00 52. Prisoner " 350.00 53. Thinker " 350.00 54. The Sun Flowers Oil 500.00 55. Two Flowers " 500.00 56. Composition " 500.00 57. Approach " 500.00 Jamil M. Khan Oil 400.00 58. Composition " 400.00 59. Painting No. 1 " 1,000.00 60. Painting No. 2 " 1,000.00 Khurshid Zaman Oil 150.00 61. Lush Dancer " 150.00 Lalrahah Mubashir " 150.00 62. Painting No. 221 " 600.00 63. Painting No. 222 " 600.00 Mubashir Azim Oil 1,000.00 64. Bridge " 600.00 65. Nostalgia " 600.00 66. Colour Fantasy " 600.00 67. Boats, Nets and Moon Eching " 300.00 Nafis Iqbal Oil 150.00 68. Flower Tree " 150.00 Nazki M.H. Oil 500.00 69. Pakistan's Past " 500.00 70. Life Problems " 200.00

Fig 5. 2: Annual Exhibition of Paintings by Karachi Artists

Source: *Digital Collection*, [cdn.aaa.org.hk](https://cdn.aaa.org.hk/_source/digital_collection/fedora_extracted/55446.pdf),

https://cdn.aaa.org.hk/_source/digital_collection/fedora_extracted/55446.pdf, Accessed December 1, 2023.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Directorate of Publications organized an exhibition in Islamabad in 1973. They published a catalogue of the exhibition aimed to create an assortment of contemporary Pakistani paintings representing the 25 years of the country since the establishment in 1947. The catalogue traveled to several locations in Pakistan starting from Karachi. The curators were Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Justice Feroz Nana, Shakir Ali, and Zubeida Agha. Maqsood was part of this group exhibition and in an interview, he said, "I got my first award for painting in 1973. I paint for eight to 10 hours on Saturdays and Sundays when I am off from the office."¹⁴⁵ The artists who were featured along with Maqsood in the exhibition included Colin David, Ijaz ul Hassan, Ismail Gulgee, Jamil Naqsh, Kamil Khan Mumtaz, Laila Shahzada, Sadequain, Saeed Akhtar, Salima Hashmi, Shakir Ali, Ustad Allah Bakhsh among others.

Karachi began to face severe traffic issues in the 70s. The population exceeded by three million, resulting in lack of public transportation, poor condition of roads and high prices of petrol made it tough for the authorities. While Karachi split with public issues, its art scene sustained to flourish. A 3-day painting exhibition of Maqsood was inaugurated on March 18, 1974 at the Arts Council (Fig 5.3).

¹⁴⁵ Naseer Ahmad, "Prayers Haven't Worked for Pakistan," *Dawn*, August 21, 2008, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1071476>.



Fig 5. 3: The Sind Chief Minister, Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, is appreciating a painting in oil by Anwar Maqsood (Centre) at the Arts Council Gallery last evening. Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani, Provincial Transport Minister, is next to the painter
Source: *Dawn.com*, <https://www.dawn.com/snews/1822143>, Accessed December 1, 2023.

On June 25, 1974, Indus Gallery Karachi had a summer exhibition of paintings where Maqsood showcased his painting (Fig 5.4). The event was inaugurated by M. Jam Sadiq Ali. There were 24 other artists along with Maqsood who displayed their artworks including Sadequain and Shakir Ali.

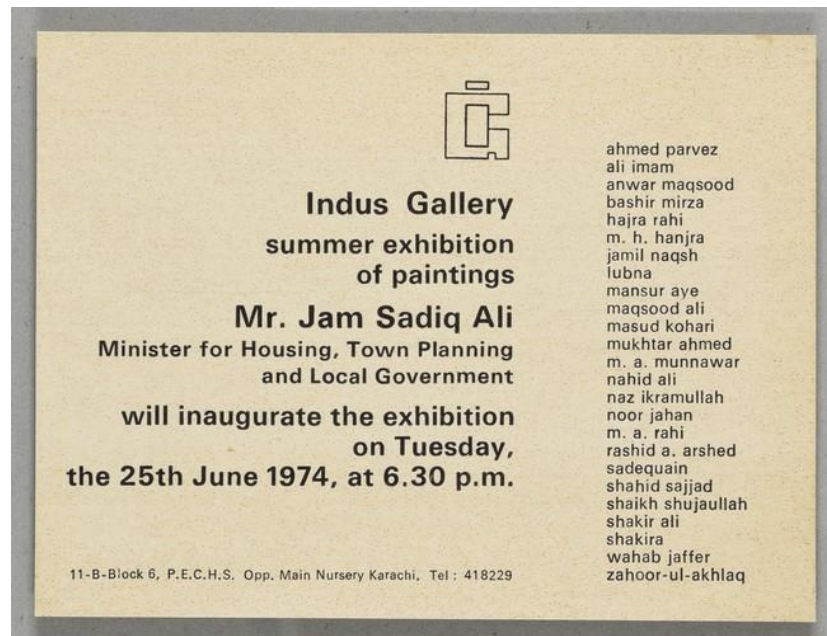


Fig 5. 4: Invitation to the opening of 'Summer Exhibition of Paintings' on 25 June 1974 at Indus Gallery
Source: "Wahab Jaffer archive 1974," [aaa.org.hk](https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/archive/wahab-jaffer-archive-1974-summer-exhibition-of-paintings/object/summer-exhibition-of-paintings-at-indus-gallery), <https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/archive/wahab-jaffer-archive-1974-summer-exhibition-of-paintings/object/summer-exhibition-of-paintings-at-indus-gallery>, Accessed December 1, 2023.

Later the next year, on August 19, 1975, he had his work displayed at the Indus Gallery's summer exhibition of paintings, alongside Colin David and 34 other prominent painters of the time (Fig 5.5).

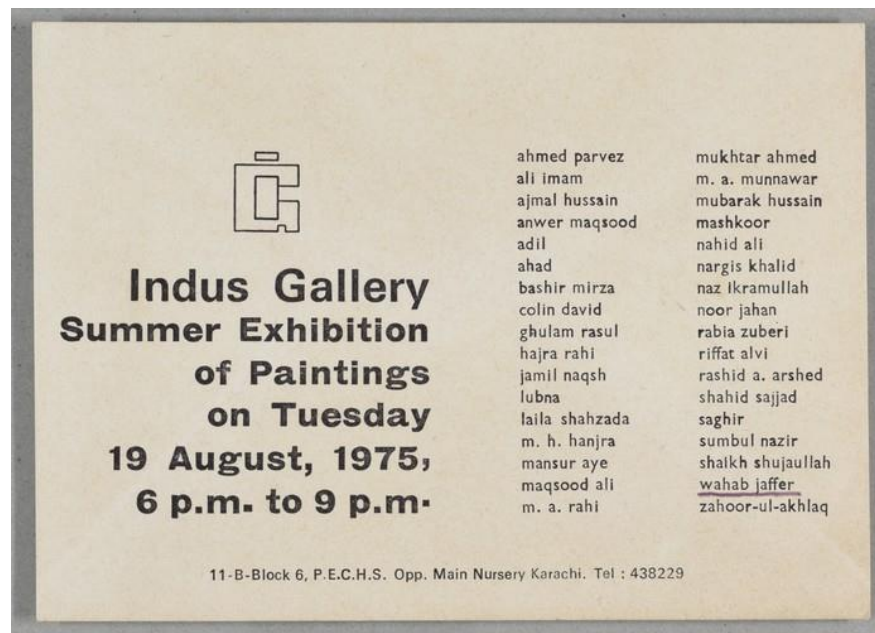


Fig 5. 5: Invitation to the 'Summer Exhibition of Paintings' that began on 19 August 1975 at Indus Gallery
 Source: "Digital collection Fedora extracted," [cdn.aaa.org.hk](https://cdn.aaa.org.hk/w900h500/digital_collection/fedora_extracted/57915.tif.jpg),
https://cdn.aaa.org.hk/w900h500/digital_collection/fedora_extracted/57915.tif.jpg, Accessed December 18, 2023.

Despite facing bans and restrictions, he continued his work until authorities recognized their mistakes and lifted restrictions discreetly. Maqsood has been an active painter since long before the Zia era that began in 1978. His paintings are housed in collections such as in the National Art Gallery in Islamabad that showcases his vibrant use of colors and strong visual statements, characterized by simplified forms and bold hues, paralleling the liveliness and naturalness found in his writing and performances. In his painting, "*The Man of Multiple Views*" he meets both painting and writing challenges and conventional norms, embracing boldness and immediacy in his expression. Maqsood demonstrates a rare breed of individuals in society who refuse to confine themselves to one creative pursuit (Fig 5.6). For him;

"Creativity transcends boundaries, enriching life in all its dimensions. His enduring connection with the people reflects his deep admiration for them, reciprocated by their affection and admiration for him." ¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ "Scarce Abstract Calligraphic Art by Anwar Maqsood," *eBay*, accessed January 12, 2024, <https://www.ebay.com/itm/364165477322>.



Fig 5. 6: Anwar Maqsood: The Man of Multiple Views

Source: *i.ebayimg.com*, <https://i.ebayimg.com/images/g/T9IAAOSwV0Vb7mwd/s-l960.webp>, Accessed January 1, 2024.

In this painting Maqsood chose a rich color palette, which defies the usual academic codes advocating that both his verbal and visual expressions showcase a boldness that transforms immediate incidents and familiar objects into sublime entities.

In 2004, he continued to paint and draw the same themes but chose the method of ink on paper. His work featured light lines, figurative elements, and occasional hints of bright colors, as shown in the figure (Fig 5.7).



Fig 5. 7: Anwar Maqsood, 21 x 26 Inch, Ink on Paper, Figurative Painting, AC-AWM-035-300x300

Source: *Artciti.com*, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/Anwar-Maqsood-Painting/Anwar-Maqsood-Figurative-Painting-AC-AWM-035>, Accessed January 7, 2024.

The Indus Inspiration II was held in 2005 at Lords Cricket Ground in London. It was an exhibition and auction for Artists Tribute to Education held during an English Premier League football match. It was part of a step to raise funds for establishing more schools by the Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust (SNPET). The event featured two other short performances by students and exhibition of 30 artworks donated to the trust by artists including Maqsood as a Pakistani artist. An excited Edward Rising spoke to one of the two bidders competing for a Maqsood painting said, “If you decide to raise your auction paddle, you can get your share of cheers and applause.”¹⁴⁷

In 2014, Jubilee Life organized an art competition “*Arttastic*,” for art schools in Pakistan. Maqsood was invited as a juror alongside Naheed Raza and Maqsood Ahmed Ansari (Fig 5.8). The theme of the competition was “*Live Free*,” reflecting Jubilee Life's belief in 'Freedom' as a state of mind where students showcase their creativity and talent. Three prominent art schools participated; Indus Valley School of Arts and Architecture (Karachi), Karachi School of Arts and Hunerkada Institute (Islamabad).¹⁴⁸



Fig 5. 8: Arttastic 2014 (unleash the artist within)

Source: “Jubilee Life Insurance, 2014 Custodian Issue,”

<https://www.jubileelife.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/The-CustodianApril-June2014.pdf>,
Accessed January 8, 2024.

¹⁴⁷ Aatekah Mir Khan, “Auction for a Cause: The Art of Giving,” *The Express Tribune*, November 29, 2010, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/83652/auction-for-a-cause-the-art-of-giving>.

¹⁴⁸ “2nd SAARC Insurance Conference,” *Jubilee Life Insurance*, 2014, *Custodian Issue*, <https://www.jubileelife.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/The-CustodianApril-June2014.pdf>.

In 2016, Pakistan National Council of the Arts announced to have a Permanent Collection, comprising of art resources that have been gifted or attained by the PNCA over the years. The PNCA holds valued artworks from several prominent Pakistani artists, including Maqsood artworks alongside other artists like Abdul Rahman Chughtai, Ahmed Parvez and Sadequain. These collections highlight the rich artistic legacy preserved by the PNCA, showcasing the contributions of living and deceased artists who have made noteworthy impressions on the art scene in Pakistan.

On October 30, 2017, Maqsood had an exhibition of his artworks at the Koel Cafe Gallery Karachi. His paintings portray characters in situations with comprehensible backstories but indefinite futures, particularly evident in his paintings are women. Maqsood, like many great artists, is fascinated by the form of a female. The way he draws their eyes suggests a depth that invites viewers to explore further layers of their physical and psychosocial selves, creating a suspension of disbelief. His forte for painting is lines, rich palette of colors and the use of charcoal. The combination of a sad looking girl with a restless bird, for instance, creates a poignant and multifaceted image (Fig 5.9).¹⁴⁹



Fig 5. 9: Anwar Maqsood, 14 x 21-inch, acrylic on paper, figurative painting
Source: *Artciti.com*, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/Anwar-Maqsood-Painting/Anwar-Maqsood-Figurative-Painting-AC-AWM-008>, Accessed January 8, 2024.

¹⁴⁹ Peerzada Salman, "Anwar Maqsood Exhibits His Paintings in Karachi," *Images*, October 18, 2017, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1178640>.

Later, on November 17, 2017, Maqsood held a painting exhibition at Koel Art Gallery. His inspiration isn't limited to a single form of expression, but it is beyond performing arts. He was known as the people's man through his art and after several years made a comeback with an exhibition titled 'Birds Have Cages,' showcasing themes of women, birds, and their desire for freedom (Fig 5.10).



Fig 5. 10: Birds have cages

Source: *Thenews.com.pk*,

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/you/249519-birds-have-cages>, Accessed January 8, 2024.

The event was attended by many media personalities and celebrities, including Faisal Kapadia, Yasir Hussain, Zubaida Tariq, Bilal Maqsood, and Imrana Maqsood (Fig 5.11).

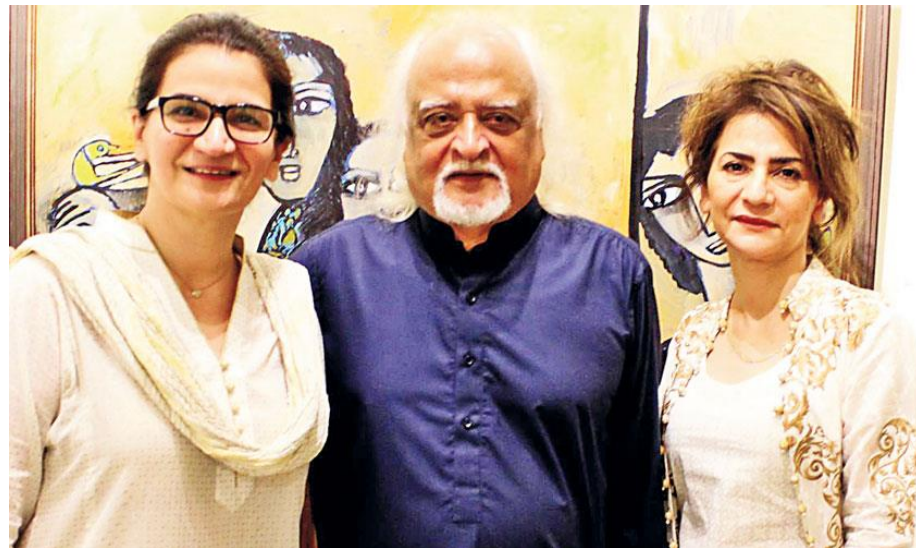


Fig 5. 11: Maqsood at Koel Art Gallery Karachi

Source: *Thenews.com.pk*,

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/you/249519-birds-have-cages>, Accessed January 9, 2024.

Although writing and painting are dissimilar practices but Maqsood art shows a clear connection between the two. His paintings, like his words, present bold, simple, yet profound images and thoughts. He uses vibrant colors to portray a deep bond between humans and birds. According to Maqsood;

“I love colours! I can play with them. I know what to put where! If people loved my work, it means that my work somehow managed to make a place in their hearts. And that feels great!” When asked what motivated him to start painting again, he said, “Actually, it was my grandson who inspired me. While leaving for the US, he gave me a paintbrush and said, ‘dada! leave the pen and pick this up’; and that’s how I started painting again.”¹⁵⁰

On March 18, 2018 a three-day exhibition was held at Art Council of Maqsood’s paintings on Karachi’s traffic issues, inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Sindh. A review of the exhibition of Maqsood painting on Karachi’s traffic issue notes.

“Individuality and perception stand out in Maqsood’s new paintings in oil and watercolor. A flood of colours both in sharp contrast and perfect harmony create forms and patterns. At a glance, it appears as if these forms and patterns have emerged out of loops and circles interwoven into one another, with colours either emerging from themselves or clashing with each other. The artist has used gold and silver powder to create a soothing effect. The delicate color scheme highlights the rhythmic flow of his paintbrush. Overall, Maqsood’s work seems to be inspired by our rich cultural past.”¹⁵¹

Maqsood continued painting practice after the exhibition received a great response. His intention was to depict social and political situations of Pakistan on canvas, along with the violence and lies that surround the country. On April 15, 2020, during the pandemic, he had limited himself within the walls of his house but he returned to paint elements that have taken on a deeper emotional significance. He painted “*White star series*” with the clarity of a summer sunrise with additional elements like boxed windows, trees, and hanging curves that add an extra dimension to the sense of loneliness. The sadness in the eyes of his subjects or birds suggests something more profound happening in the artist's environment. Although his motifs remain the same (Fig 5.12).¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Iqra Sarfaraz, “Birds Have Cages,” *The News*, accessed January 28, 2024, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/you/249519-birds-have-cages>.

¹⁵¹ Peerzada Salman, “This Week 50 Years Ago: Anwar Maqsood’s Paintings and Traffic Issues,” *Dawn*, March 18, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1822143>.

¹⁵² Peerzada Salman, “Anwar Maqsood Goes back to Painting in Lockdown,” *Dawn Images*, April 15, 2020, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1185070>.



Fig 5. 12: Maqsood's artwork White Star
Source: *Images dawn*,
<https://images.dawn.com/news/1185070>, Accessed January 29, 2024.

Later on, June 27, 2020, he had another exhibition at the Koel Cafe Gallery, it was particularly significant because he has featured characters in situations where their pasts are clear but their future activities are uncertain, similar to the situation of Pakistan. This is diverse from his writing, where he often highlights the flaws and quirks of the people. It seems that Maqsood is fascinated by the female character's eyes, physical and psychological depth which creates a sense of mystery and intrigue in his paintings (Fig 5.13).



Fig 5. 13: Anwar Maqsood paintings exhibition in Karachi
Source: *Images.dawn.com*,
<https://images.dawn.com/news/1178640>, Accessed January 29, 2024.

The central art of Maqsood is the power of his lines, enhanced by lively colors and the use of charcoal to fill the canvas, usage of symbols, particularly birds, adds depth to his work. The combination of a bird and a human figure, especially a sad-looking girl with a restless bird, creates a rich and layered meaning (Fig 5.14).



Fig 5. 14: Anwar Maqsood exhibits his paintings in Karachi
Source: *Images dawn*, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1178640>, Accessed January 29, 2024.

In the same year, 2020, he painted several figurative works representing females along with birds, including the following paintings (Fig 5.15).



Fig 5. 15: Anwar Maqsood, 24 x 48 Inch, Acrylic on Canvas, Figurative Painting, AC-AWM-002-300x300, 24 x 48 and AC-AWM-001-300x300, Source: Artciti.com, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/Anwar-Maqsood-Painting?page=1>, <https://myartguide.com/stage/artists/anwar-maqsood/81>, Accessed January 30, 2024.

On his battle with Covid-19 in November 2020, Maqsood acknowledged the impact of difficult days on people. Maqsood exhibited ten of his artworks to celebrate March 23rd, in collaboration with poetic strokes. The theme of the exhibition was love and hope. He explained the theme in his paintings where he showcased adaptability and bold attitude towards life, stated;

"It's a day of commitment and promise to fulfill the dream of many. It's a day of commitment to our land to see it flourish and keep its flag high. It's an Ahde Wafa, a promise that Pakistanis will prevail wherever they may be."¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Ghazalatikki Zaman and Tabassum Vally, "A Legend of Many Talents," *Khaleej Times*, March 23, 2021, <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/supplements/a-legend-of-many-talents>.

He remained humorous, hopeful, and grateful for the future generation and viewed today's youth as extremely dedicated to their dreams. He noted the failures of his own generation in dealing, expectations and systems but is full of hope for the ambitious and honest youth of today. This optimism was no surprise for audience, as he has a gift for seeing the best in everyone and every situation. Maqsood's life has demonstrated courage, and he had been a true hero of public society. He has made the pen prove mightier than the sword with his pen on paper and brush on canvas. His unwavering patriotism and the tendency to speak the truth no matter the consequences saw him rattle sabers with General Zia-ul-Haq himself, a period he says was his artistic best. Maqsood has been analyzing the serious issues of our times through his television programs. His passion for painting continues unabated, with his signature canvases prized by local and overseas devotees. He wrote the satirical talk show for the state-run channel, but once the script came back from the censors, just the salutation '*Assalamalaikum*' remained unedited.

"They also insisted that I not invite any army officer as a guest. How could I not have as guests' people from an institution that has ruled the country for 34 years out of its 57 years of existence?" A private channel gave me complete freedom of expression and poetic license. I told them I have been in this line of work for the last 42 years and I know where to draw the line."¹⁵⁴

In 2021, the majority of his paintings were abstract, featuring sharp lines, female faces, and figures with bold, bright colors. Some works even incorporated neon colors (Fig 5.16).

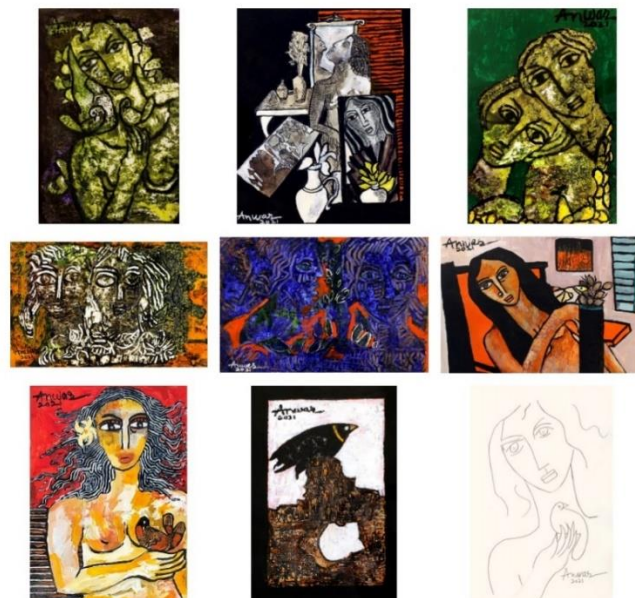


Fig 5. 16: Anwar Maqsood's Paintings, Acrylic on Paper, Figurative Painting, Mixed Media and Pencil on Paper
Source: *Artciti.com*, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/Anwar-Maqsood-Painting?page=2>, Accessed January 30, 2024.

¹⁵⁴ Adil Ahmad, "Anwar Maqsood the King of Caustic Wit," *Indpaedia*, accessed February 2, 2024, http://indpaedia.com/ind/index.php/Anwar_Maqsood,_artist.

In 2021, He continued to excel in his skills and painted several abstract calligraphic pieces (Fig 5.17).



Fig 5. 17: Anwar Maqsood, Acrylic on Canvas, Calligraphy, Mixed Media on Paper AC-AWM-028, AC-AWM-025, AC-AWM-021, AC-AWM-029, AC-AWM-026, Source: Artciti.com, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/Anwar-Maqsood-Painting?page=1>, Accessed February 1, 2024.

He not only used birds and female figures in his work, but also created calligraphic pieces. His calligraphic works often feature abstract surroundings and shapes with eye-catching foregrounds and backgrounds, such as his acrylic on paper calligraphy painting (Fig 5.18).



Fig 5. 18: Anwar Maqsood, 14 x 21-inch, acrylic on paper, calligraphy painting 2021, ac-awm-003
Source: *Artciti.com*, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/Anwar-Maqsood-Painting/Anwar-Maqsood-Calligraphy-Painting-AC-AWM-003>, Accessed February 2, 2024.

Besides calligraphy, he painted several other artworks as shown in the (Fig 5.19).



Fig 5. 19: Anwar Maqsood's Paintings, Mixed Media on Paper, Figurative Painting and Acrylic on Canvas
Source: *Artciti.com*, <https://artciti.com/shop-by-artist/Anwar-Maqsood-Painting?page=1>, Accessed February 3, 2024.

Maqsood inaugurated a sculpture show titled "*Tribute to Sadequain*" by Anjum Ayaz, which was held on October 23, 2021, at the Arts Council of Pakistan. During the inauguration, Anjum Ayaz expressed his gratitude, stating that he credits his artistic inspiration to both Anwar Maqsood and Mohammad Ahmed Shah (Fig 5.20).¹⁵⁵



Fig 5. 20: Sculpture Show Tribute to Sadequain by Anjum Ayaz at ACP
Source: *Instagram.com*, <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CVX3W3IoEOJ/?igsh=MTY3dmVzMzdmejJvcQ%3D%3D>, Accessed February 3, 2024.

¹⁵⁵ Acpkhiofficial, "Sculpture Show Tribute to Sadequain by Anjum Ayaz," *Instagram*, October 23, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CVX3W3IoEOJ/?igsh=MTY3dmVzMzdmejJvcQ%3D%3D>.

On September 6, 2022, Maqsood was invited to a Mini Thesis Show at Arts Council of Pakistan arranged over the topic of floods in Pakistan. He shared his sentiments during his speech where he mentioned that he found comfort in the artwork of students on display (Fig 5.21). He additionally said;

"I was worried because of the flood. Today, seeing the work of these students has reduced my anxiety," Maqsood said. The Art School's Principal, Shahid Rasam, added, "These students will get jobs when they graduate. No one will be unemployed. The students are happy and satisfied with their studies." He explained that the show, titled "Khoj," is a collaborative project between Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and Iqra University."¹⁵⁶



Fig 5. 21:Anwar Maqsood addresses the students of Arts Council during Mini Theses Show 2022 on September 6
Source: *Thenews.com*, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/988946-maqsood-praises-students-artwork-says-it-eased-his-anxiety-amid-floods>, Accessed February 4, 2024.

Rasam recalled a personal anecdote;

"He [Maqsood] had autographed a picture of me in the eighties, and after that, my luck shined. Seeing all of your work, many stories come to mind."¹⁵⁷

The exhibition featured the works of eight students specializing in communication design, showcasing unique projects and initiatives that reflected various aspects of life. Afterward, Maqsood also visited the relief camp arranged by the Arts Council, along with other notable attendees included Shahid Rasam, Joint Secretary Asjad Bukhari, Member Governing Body Bashir Saddozai, and Shakeel Khan.

¹⁵⁶ Web Desk. "Anwar Maqsood Praises Students Artwork, Says It Eased His Anxiety amid Floods," *The News*, September 6, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/988946-maqsood-praises-students-artwork-says-it-eased-his-anxiety-amid-floods>.

¹⁵⁷ Web Desk. "Anwar Maqsood Praises Students Artwork, Says It Eased His Anxiety amid Floods," *The News*, September 6, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/988946-maqsood-praises-students-artwork-says-it-eased-his-anxiety-amid-floods>.

In December 2022, the Arts and Crafts Mini Theses Show was held at the Arts Council Karachi. The show was a collaborative effort by the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and Iqra University, named *Khoj*. Maqsood was invited as a judge (Fig 5.22). He appreciated the work of students, stating;

"I was very worried because of the flood in Pakistan which occurred in June 2022, but after seeing the work of these students, I have felt a little relief. The students have done amazing work. They belong to different areas of Karachi, which are very different from the city, but for them hold great significance. These students want to stick to their roots. They want to regain the peaceful environment which their elders had. If these students keep working like this, they will surely regain it in no time." ¹⁵⁸



Fig 5. 22: Arts and Crafts Mini Theses Show held at Arts Council Karachi

Source: *Youtube.com*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Lk7f0op2eU&t=53s>, Accessed February 4, 2024.

On March 17, 2023, a National Art Exhibition was hosted in Karachi by The Ahmed Parvez Art Gallery at the Arts Council of Pakistan, featuring a range of artworks from collection of artists, including Maqsood (Fig 5.23). The show aimed to build a connection between the cultural, social, political, and denominational distinctions by combining the efforts of different artistes from all over the country. President of ACP Mohammad Ahmed Shah addressed the audience by saying the following words.

"The goal of exhibition was to foster national unity through culture and art. The purpose is to create national integrity through culture and art. All these colors in the paintings are depicting their respective cultures."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Anwar Maqsood Wowed by Students Art Exhibit." *Aaj English TV*, September 7, 2022, <https://english.aaj.tv/news/30297561>.

¹⁵⁹ Buraq Shabbir. "Aiming to Bridge Divides, Karachi Art Exhibition Brings Together 100 Painters from across Pakistan." *Arab News PK*, March 19, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2271311/lifestyle>.

The gallery was visited by art collectors who highlighted the success of the exhibition and its role in promoting unity and cultural appreciation across Pakistan.



Fig 5. 23: The National Art Exhibition 2023 at the Ahmed Parvez Karachi, on March 17, 2023
Source: *Arabnews.pk*, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2271311/lifestyle>, Accessed February 5, 2024.

The exhibition was also held in Lahore featuring additional artists. Art critic Quddus Mirza noted that, "Creative acts, such as this exhibition, can help reduce ethnic divides and bring people together."¹⁶⁰ While veteran artist Ajab Khan remarked, "The field of art is associated with love. An artist is only able to produce colors on the canvas with love."¹⁶¹ Governor Kamran Tessori from the province of Sindh, who inaugurated the exhibition welcomed the event as a positive change, commenting; "Social evils were born in the country when poets, intellectuals, and painters had been silenced in the past."¹⁶²

On June 9, 2023, the Pakistan National Council of Arts held an art exhibition titled "*Perpetual Beings Vol 2*". A wide range of permanent collection from the National Art Gallery, along with new artefacts from artists across Pakistan were exhibited. The display included an extensive range of inventive mediums and techniques with a combination of contemporary and traditional styles. The exhibition showcased artworks of Maqsood, Ijaz ul Hassan, Salima Hashmi, Anwar Jalal Shemza, Zubeida Agha among others.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Buraq Shabbir, "Aiming to Bridge Divides, Karachi Art Exhibition Brings Together 100 Painters from across Pakistan," *Arab News PK*, March 19, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2271311/lifestyle>.

¹⁶¹ Buraq Shabbir, "Aiming to Bridge Divides, Karachi Art Exhibition Brings Together 100 Painters from across Pakistan," *Arab News PK*, March 19, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2271311/lifestyle>.

¹⁶² Buraq Shabbir, "Aiming to Bridge Divides, Karachi Art Exhibition Brings Together 100 Painters from across Pakistan," *Arab News PK*, March 19, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2271311/lifestyle>.

¹⁶³ Zulfiqar Baig, "Artworks by Eminent Artists Go on Show," *The Express Tribune*, June 9, 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2420816/artworks-by-eminent-artists-go-on-show>.

On September 25, 2023, the closing ceremony of the Art and Crafts exhibition was held at the Ahmed Parvaiz Art Gallery showcasing artworks by prisoners in Karachi (Fig 5.24). Amongst the attendees were Jail Superintendent, Former IG Sindh, Former Provincial Minister, Maqsood and prisoner artists Muhammad Ijaz and Allah Wadayo. Also present were political and social figures along with senior police officers. Maqsood expressed his appreciation, by saying the following words.

"I visited the exhibition and was deeply moved by the beautiful artwork. It's been a long time since I've seen such a good exhibition. I wish I could meet these prisoners personally. Their calligraphy skills are remarkable, and I congratulate them. Among them are talented artists, some serving life sentences and others facing death penalties. I appeal to the authorities to consider reducing their sentences."¹⁶⁴

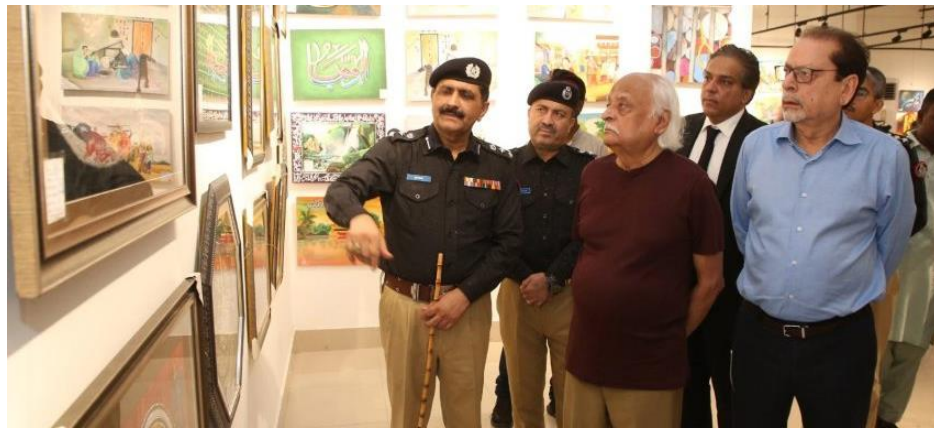


Fig 5. 24: Three days Art and craft exhibition by Prisoners artist concludes with a bang at Arts Council
Source: *Biztoday.news*, <https://www.biztoday.news/2023/09/25/three-days-art-and-craft-exhibition-by-prisoners-artist-concludes-with-a-bang-at-arts-council/>, Accessed February 5, 2024.

On January 8, 2024, The Arts Council of Karachi arranged the final year thesis show at the Ahmed Parvez Art Gallery and Haseena Moin Hall. Maqsood inaugurated the event (Fig 5.25). He expressed his happiness after seeing the thesis, he praised the efforts of middle-class children whose efforts, dedication and hard work were highlighted. He extended congratulations to the teachers, Ahmed Shah, and all the students, highlighting that the success of the graduating students was a testament to the institution's achievements. Shah expressed gratitude to Maqsood, mentioning him as a mentor and elder.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ "Three Days Art and Craft Exhibition by Prisoners Artist Concludes with a Bang at Arts Council," *Biz Today*, September 25, 2023, <https://www.biztoday.news/2023/09/25/three-days-art-and-craft-exhibition-by-prisoners-artist-concludes-with-a-bang-at-arts-council/>.

¹⁶⁵ "Arts Council Organizes Grand Display of Thesis by the Final Years Students of ACP's Art School," *Biz Today*, January 8, 2024, <https://www.biztoday.news/2024/01/08/arts-council-organizes-grand-display-of-thesis-by-the-final-years-students-of-acps-art-school/>.



Fig 5. 25: Arts Council organizes Grand Display of Thesis by the Final Years Students of ACP's Art School

Source: *Biztoday.news*,

<https://www.biztoday.news/2024/01/08/arts-council-organizes-grand-display-of-thesis-by-the-final-years-students-of-acps-art-school/>, Accessed February 6, 2024.

On January 27, 2024, Maqsood and President of the Arts Council, Muhammad Ahmad Shah, inaugurated the First Alumni Festival 2024 which was held at the Arts Council of Pakistan (Fig 5.26).¹⁶⁶ During the event, Maqsood appreciated the work of all the artists and applauded Shah for his efforts in advancing art and culture and influencing students to focus on their creative pursuits.



Fig 5. 26: Anwar Maqsood and President of the Arts Council Muhammad Ahmad Shah inaugurating the First Alumni Festival 2024 held at Arts Council of Pakistan January 27

Sources: *App.com.pk*,

<https://www.app.com.pk/photos-section/renowned-intellectual-anwar-maqsood-and-president-of-the-arts-council-muhammad-ahmad-shah-inaugurating-the-first-alumni-festival-2024-held-at-arts-council-of-pakistan/>, Accessed February 6, 2024.

¹⁶⁶ "Renowned Intellectual Anwar Maqsood and President of the Arts Council Muhammad Ahmad Shah Inaugurating the First Alumni Festival 2024 Held at Arts Council of Pakistan," *Associated Press of Pakistan Digital*, January 27, 2024, <https://www.app.com.pk/photos-section/renowned-intellectual-anwar-maqsood-and-president-of-the-arts-council-muhammad-ahmad-shah-inaugurating-the-first-alumni-festival-2024-held-at-arts-council-of-pakistan/>.

5.2 Host/Anchor Person

Maqsood has hosted multiple shows over the years where he has highlighted the social and political conditions of Pakistan through his writings and humor. In 1952 at Maqsood's show *Silver Jubilee*, he interviewed Pakistani film actor Waheed Murad (Fig 5.27). During the conversation, he emphasized the industry's struggles, efforts, and hard work, as well as Murad's career and issues which the film industry was facing. Murad mentioned that despite holding a Master's degree, he felt his education hadn't been effectively utilized up to that point in his life. He suggested that to enter the film industry, one only needs to be matriculate but talented.



Fig 5. 27: Late Actor Waheed Murad in Anwar Maqsood's show

Source: *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/AmuseYouu/videos/late-actor-waheed-murad-in-anwar-maqsoods-show/264259438107518/>, Accessed February 8, 2024.

He hosted a show called *App K Leye*, in 1980, where he interviewed various actors, musicians, and celebrities.¹⁶⁷ One of the captivating interviews was with pop icons Nazia and Zoheb Hassan, where he unveiled their musical journey, shared candid moments, and highlighted their timeless charm (Fig 5.28).



Fig 5. 28: Nazia & Zoheb Memorable Interview with Anwar Maqsood (1980s)

Source: *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/GoldenEraofPTV/videos/short-clip-interview-of-sultan-rahi/890653377673608/>, Accessed February 8, 2024.

¹⁶⁷ Translation: App K Leye (For You).

In 1983, Maqsood interviewed Aziz Mian who was a renowned poet and qawwali singer of his era. The talk revolved around Mian's life, travels, music, and accomplishments. Maqsood, known for filling his interviews with wit and humor, upheld a serious yet light-hearted tone throughout the interview. He also brought attention to the dire water conditions in Karachi during their discussion (Fig 5.29).



Fig 5. 29: Aziz Mian Interview with Anwar Maqsood

Source: *Facebook.com*,

<https://www.facebook.com/AmuseYouu/videos/aziz-mian-interview-with-anwar-maqsood/634980767082832/>,
Accessed February 9, 2024.

He interviewed two PTV artists, Saba Pervaiz and Huma Hameed in 1986, where he questioned them about their profession, personal lives, and the dramas they had acted in. The interview also carried a social message that women can outshine in both their professional and personal lives (Fig 5.30).



Fig 5. 30: Two great PTV artists Saba Parvaiz and Huma Hameed interviewed by Anwar Maqsood in Show Time.

Source: *Facebook.com*, https://www.facebook.com/VintagePakistan/videos/two-great-ptv-artists-saba-parvaiz-and-huma-hameed-interviewed-by-anwar-maqsood-/885528101527644/?_rdc=2&_rdr, Accessed February 9, 2024.

In 1991, Maqsood hosted a show called "Studio 2 1/2," where Moin Akhtar represented numerous characters such as a doctor, politician, lawyer, and actor (Fig 5.31). The show featured witty conversations on social, political, and professional issues in Pakistan. The show was held in front of a live audience where the viewers actively participated by asking witty questions from Maqsood and his guests. Moreover, a few other characters joined Maqsood on stage, engaging in humorous and entertaining dialogue.¹⁶⁸



Fig 5. 31: Studio 2-1-2 Vol 1

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btEOaSgOGLE>, Accessed February 9, 2024.

After Studio 2 1/2, Maqsood hosted Studio Ponay Teen. In the show social and political problems were debated and solutions were sought in a witty manner. Akhtar impersonated various characters for instance an old master, and was joined by supporting characters to make the show appealing for the audience. They sarcastically talked about government officers and their job duties, the careers of musicians in Pakistan, the increased prices of musical instruments, and rising taxes (Fig 5.32).¹⁶⁹



Fig 5. 32: Anwar Maqsood as Host Moin Akhtar Ustad Ji k Roop Ma

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDsK-scZrP0>, Accessed February 9, 2024.

¹⁶⁸ Khan Home Films, "Studio 2-1-2 Vol 1," Posted August 18, 2012, YouTube, 2:12:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btEOaSgOGLE>.

¹⁶⁹ Agay Ki Khabar, "Anwar Maqsood as Host Moin Akhtar Ustad Ji K Roop Ma," Posted June 11, 2024, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDsK-scZrP0>.

In 1992, Maqsood hosted a show called *Apka Anwar Maqsood*, where he sarcastically interviewed various characters, including news anchors (Fig 5.33).¹⁷⁰ The show had different segments, all filled with sitcom-style socio-political comedy, poking fun at politicians, household social issues, cricket, and the police. A special segment featured humorous music and cooking show narrating the condition of Pakistan.¹⁷¹



Fig 5. 33: Ap ka Anwar Maqsood Episode 1 Part 1

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4l3agifYqo>, Accessed February 10, 2024.

Maqsood interviewed Pakistani all-rounder cricketer Shahid Afridi, in 1998 on PTV sports program, “LG TV show” which was filled with humor and satire (Fig 5.34). Maqsood not only communicated with Afridi about his interests, goals and career but also humorously remarked on the Pakistan Cricket Board and traffic situation of Karachi. Maqsood interviewed three other guests in the same show.



Fig 5. 34 : PTV, LG TV show

Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2p2v54>, Accessed February 10, 2024.

¹⁷⁰ Translation: Apka Anwar Maqsood (Your Anwar Maqsood).

¹⁷¹ Vintage Vibes, “Ap Ka Anwar Maqsood Episode 1 Part 1,” Posted January 15, 2024, YouTube, 5:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4l3agifYqo>.

The show highlights the obstacles faced by officers as a result of social and political changes, especially on their future and incomes. Behrouz Sabzwari and Qazi Wajid had a segment where he sarcastically critiqued Pakistani cricketers and their overall performance (Fig 5.35).¹⁷²



Fig 5. 35: Shahid Afridi Rare Interview 1998 by Anwar Maqsood Hameedi
Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2p2v54>, Accessed February 11, 2024.

In 1998, Maqsood and Shahida Mini hosted a program titled "*Eid Hungama*" at PTV Lahore Centre (Fig 5.36). Maqsood's hosting was characterized by his trademark witty comments and engaging conversation.¹⁷³



Fig 5. 36: Anwar Maqsood & Shahida Mini Programme (Eid Hungama) Ptv Lahore Centre 1998
Source: *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9KQb9_9-KY, Accessed February 11, 2024.

¹⁷² PTV Sports, "Shahid Afridi Rare Interview 1998 by Anwar Maqsood Hameedi," Posted 2015, Dailymotion, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2p2v54>.

¹⁷³ Jhankar Tv Ke Geet, "Anwar Maqsood & Shahida Mini Programme Eid Hungama Ptv Lahore Centre 1998," Posted January 14, 2021, YouTube, 1:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9KQb9_9-KY.

On a PTV he hosted a program where he and Moin Akhtar had a funny yet insightful discussion about importance of education in Pakistan (Fig 5.37). Akhtar and Maqsood used humor, poetry, and witty dialogue to illustrate the situation humorously but thoughtfully.¹⁷⁴



Fig 5. 37: Moin Akhtar Anwar Maqsood

Source: *Dailymotion.com*,

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2e2s0b>, Accessed February 15, 2024.

Maqsood interviewed Bano Qudsia for PTV, where they talked about life before and after Pakistan's partition, leading to a tough and conservative lifestyle (Fig 5.38). She discussed about the challenges she faced because of societal and political influences. Qudsia also shared insights about her poetry, writings, and publications and discussed aspects of culture and everyday life.¹⁷⁵

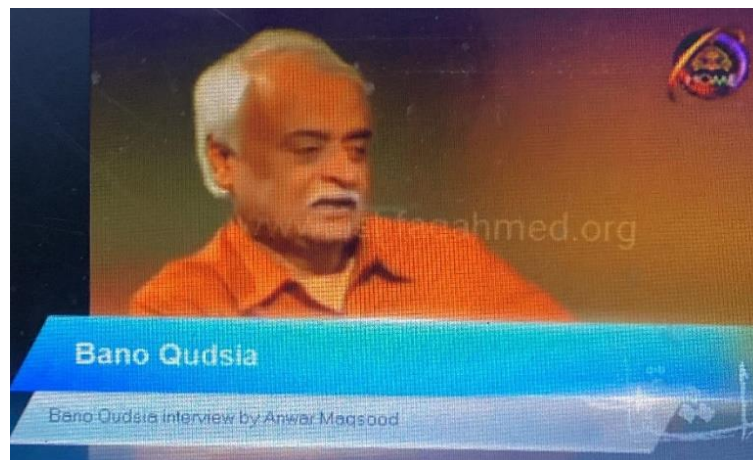


Fig 5. 38: Bano Qudsia interview by Anwar Maqsood

Source: *Dailymotion.com*,

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5bv7t7>, Accessed February 15, 2024.

¹⁷⁴ Sili Sili, "Moin Akhtar Anwar Maqsood," Posted 2015, Dailymotion, 4:20, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2e2s0b>.

¹⁷⁵ Sajid Ali, "Bano Qudsia Interview by Anwar Maqsood," Posted 2017, Dailymotion, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5bv7t7>.

Maqsood not only hosted TV shows but also funny mushairas. Akhtar excelled in mimicry and parody during these mushairas, and their interactions featured plenty of humorous poetry and entertaining exchanges between Maqsood and Akhtar (Fig 5.39).¹⁷⁶



Fig 5. 39: Anwar Maqsood hosting funny mushaira. Moin Akhtar at his best in mimicry and parody
Source: *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/razaahmadrumi/videos/anwar-maqsood-hosting-funny-mushaira-moin-akhtar-at-his-best-in-mimicry-and-paro/1525256640883886/>, Accessed February 15, 2024.

In June 2002, a comedy show *Loose Talk* was first aired, it was written and hosted by Maqsood. The show delivered humorous social and political commentary (Fig 5.40). Moin Akhtar played the role of a guest and impersonated several different personalities making the show both stimulating and funny. Bushra Ansari also appeared in several episodes. In 2008 the show went off the air after completing 415 episodes.¹⁷⁷



Fig 5. 40: Yeh Bangali Ka Passport Hai, Moin Akhtar & Anwar Maqsood in *Loose Talk*
Source: *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_tny76DQAA, Accessed February 16, 2024.

¹⁷⁶ Raza Rumi, "Anwar Maqsood Hosting Funny Mushaira. Moin Akhtar at His Best in Mimicry and Parody," *Facebook*, September 13, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/razaahmadrumi/videos/anwar-maqsood-hosting-funny-mushaira-moin-akhtar-at-his-best-in-mimicry-and-paro/1525256640883886/>.

¹⁷⁷ "Loose Talk," *YouTube*, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/@loosetalkofficial>.

In 2006, Maqsood hosted a show "AM at 8:10 PM" on Geo Pakistan where he again interviewed Shahid Afridi after almost 8 years (Fig 5.41). During the interview, they recalled their first meeting, Afridi's career and the dynamics of cricket. Maqsood and Afridi highlighted the blessings of having daughters and their contributions to family and society. Maqsood has interviewed several other celebrities on his show.¹⁷⁸



Fig 5. 41: AM at 8:10 Pm show

Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2gcvi8>, Accessed February 18, 2024.

In October 2010, STCF launched an event *Hum Dost* volunteer program with the annual Ladies Hi-Tea and Auction event to raise funds for the TCF Education. The event took place in December 2011. The evening was hosted by Maqsood, who introduced antique pieces for auction, some of which were donated by Amin Gulgee, renowned jeweler Meena Patil, and Le Mosaque Elan by Humaira Hayat. Maqsood, with his witty jokes and comic reassurances, energized the crowd, leading to the successful sale of all items with remarkable bids (Fig 5.42).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Aleeh, "Anwar Maqsood with Shahid Afridi," Posted 2015, Dailymotion, 25:31, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2gcvi8>.

¹⁷⁹ "TCF Alumni Programme," *The Citizen Foundation*, 2011, https://www.tcfusa.org/resources-pdf/annual-reports/2011_AR.pdf.



Fig 5. 42: Supporters of TCF (STCF) in Pakistan

Source: "Resources Annual Reports 2011," *tcfusa.org*, https://www.tcfusa.org/resources-pdf/annual-reports/2011_AR.pdf, Accessed February 18, 2024.

On September 13, 2016, Maqsood interviewed Imran Khan and started off by reminiscing his love for cricket and watching Imran Khan's matches. They discussed the 1992 World Cup and other cricket stories from Khan's career. The conversation then shifted to social and societal norms, current affairs in Pakistan, including corruption, injustice, electoral cheating, as well as the condition of the police. Khan highlighted the progress he had made in improving the education system in Peshawar within a year. Throughout the interview, Maqsood interjected with witty comments and questions, adding a humorous touch to the discussion (Fig 5.43).



Fig 5. 43: ARY News Special Interview of Imran Khan by Anwar Maqsood 13th September 2016

Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4t8kji>, Accessed February 18, 2024.

Anwarnama, was a series released in 2018, hosted by Maqsood where he shares letters, writings, stories, and personal experiences touching on themes of society, culture, politics, and

notable personalities in an intimate setting (Fig 5.44).¹⁸⁰ *Anwarnama* discloses an audio and visual tapestry that is candid, introspective, and thoughtful. It marked return of Maqsood to the screen following the passing of the legendary Moin Akhtar. Each episode features Maqsood reading letters that engage in conversations about conditions of Pakistan with various popular personalities, filled with his trademark wit and humor.¹⁸¹



Fig 5. 44: Anwarnama by Anwar Maqsood
Source: Facebook.com, <https://www.facebook.com/anwarnamaofficial/>, Accessed February 18, 2024.

The episodes entertained topics like *Patras Bukhari Ka Khat*, *Habib Jalib ka khat*, *Ansoo Urdu Shayari Mai*, *Maangey Ki Kitabain Wapsi Par*, *Allama Iqbal ka khat*, *Qissa General Zia-Ul-Haq ka*, *Ahmed Faraz ka khat*, *Loose Mushaira & Qissa Moin Akhtar*, *Manto Ka Khat*, *Sadequain Ka Khat*, where Maqsood's narrative style captures the essence of Pakistan's social and cultural landscape (Fig 5.45).¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Translation: Anwarnama (The Story of Anwar).

¹⁸¹ Pop Box, "Anwarnama Episode 8 Patras Bukhari Ka Khat," Posted April 13, 2018, YouTube, 4:11, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhW8mbYgtko>.

¹⁸² Translations: Patras Bukhari Ka Khat (Patras Bukhari's Letter), Habib Jalib Ka Khat (Habib Jalib's Letter), Ansoo Urdu Shayari Mai (Tears in Urdu Poetry), Maangey Ki Kitabain Wapsi Par (The Return of Borrowed Books), Allama Iqbal Ka Khat (Allama Iqbal's Letter), Qissa General Zia-Ul-Haq Ka (The Tale of General Zia-Ul-Haq), Ahmed Faraz Ka Khat (Ahmed Faraz's Letter), Loose Mushaira (Loose Poetry Gathering), Qissa Moin Akhtar (The Tale of Moin Akhtar), Manto Ka Khat (Manto's Letter), Sadequain Ka Khat (Sadequain's Letter).

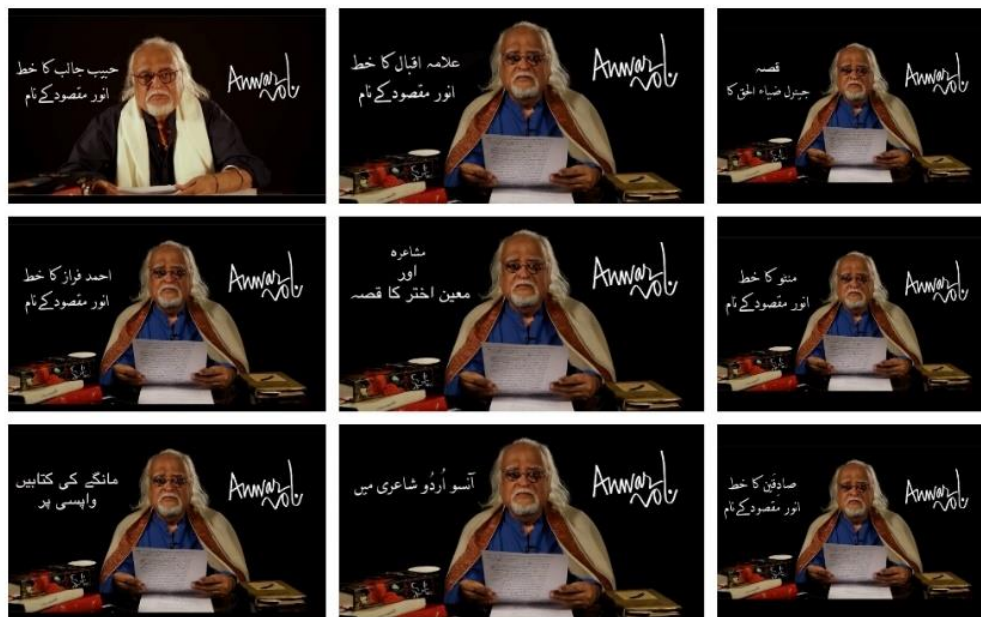


Fig 5. 45: Episodes of Anwarnama

Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhW8mbYgtko>, Accessed February 18, 2024.

On November 27, 2020, Maqsood started to host a new show, *Mere Aangan Se*, which was loosely created considering "Loose Talk" (Fig 5.46). The show features Yasir Hussain playing various interesting characters. Although the show looks promising but some enthusiasts think Hussain is trying to follow the footsteps of Akhtar, giving interviews in the appearance of diverse characters in every episode, repeatedly addressing politics and societal issues in a way that made the audience laugh.¹⁸³ Current issues, particularly Covid-19 was also under discussion during the shows, while due to the pandemic the show was set in an outdoor setting. Maqsood in the first episode considering the pandemic mentioned, "How many activities have moved outdoors due to the pandemic."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Shaiza Kiran, "Anwar Maqsood to Bring Back Loose Talk with Yasir Hussain & People Stand Divided," *Diva Magazine*, November 26, 2020, <https://www.divaonline.com.pk/anwar-maqsood-to-bring-back-loose-talk-with-yasir-hussain-people-stand-divided/>.

¹⁸⁴ Sharmeen Imran, "Anwar Maqsood's New Web Series Mere Aangan Se," *Runway Pakistan*, November 27, 2020, <https://runwaypakistan.com/anwar-maqsoods-new-web-series-mere-aangan-se/>.



Fig 5. 46: Anwar Maqsood's New Web Series Mere Aangan Se

Source: *Runwaypakistan.com*,

<https://runwaypakistan.com/anwar-maqsoods-new-web-series-mere-aangan-se/>, Accessed February 19, 2024.

In 2023, Arts Council of Karachi, Pakistan organized an evening with Maira Khan which was hosted by Maqsood (Fig 5.47). In their witty conversation they shed light on political issues and financial independence for women in Pakistan. Maqsood initiated by noticing that this was the first time he was speaking to an actress in such a setting, having previously communicated mostly with politicians and soldiers. During the conversation, Maqsood recalled about writing *Sitara and Mehrun Nisa* without enforced dialogues. Mahira expressed a desire for honesty among politicians, to which Maqsood skeptically responded, “An honest person could make everyone else dishonest, jesting about the potential consequences of turning Pakistan into a state akin to Madina.”¹⁸⁵



Fig 5. 47: An evening with Maira Khan hosted by writer Anwar Maqsood

Source: *Artscouncil.org.pk*, <https://www.artscouncil.org.pk/index.php/2023/03/20/an-evening-with-maira-khan-hosted-by-writer-anwar-maqsood/>, Accessed February 19, 2024.

¹⁸⁵ News Desk, “ACP Organizes an Evening with Mahira Khan Hosted by Anwar Maqsood,” *Pak Observer*, March 20, 2023, <https://pakobserver.net/acp-organizes-an-evening-with-mahira-khan-hosted-by-anwar-maqsood/>.

5.3 Festivals, Talks Shows and Conferences

The Shanaakht Festival took place from April 8 to April 12, 2009 at the Arts Council of Pakistan. The festival aimed to refresh national spirit with the contribution of top artists and performers of Karachi. The objective of the festival was to connect Pakistan as one nation while exploring the formative years of our country and to come together at a time when unity is needed in Pakistan.¹⁸⁶ Main events at *Shanaakht festival* comprised of art and photography exhibitions such as *Sohni Dharti II*, *Re-do Pakistan*, the *Four Faces of Karachi* showcasing vintage photographs by Lutfullah Khan. *Then and Now*, *Forgotten Paradise*, *Apnay Watan ke Saaray Rung Char Soobay*, *Char Ung*, an oral history project with audio and video clips along with Unforgettable Cricket Memories. The festival featured street theatre performances, storytelling by Pakistani pioneers, book readings and an evening with Maqsood on April 10, 2009.¹⁸⁷

Maqsood delved into his personal and professional journey during a conference at the Sixth Sense Forum in the Aga Khan University on August 31, 2012 (Fig 5.48). He started by humorously suggesting that his family's regular visits might have financed the building of two new hospital blocks. Reflecting on his own health scare, he recalled being counseled to gather funds equal to six episodes of *Loose Talk*. The treatment became more complex and extended to three and a half hours, with costs rising accordingly. He induced memories of his family's migration to Pakistan in 1948. He bewailed on the reduced size of Pakistan, comparing it to his mother's gestured insight, and highlights the loss of East Pakistan which is now Bangladesh. He asked her,

“How big is Pakistan?” She gestured with both her hands saying it was very big indeed. However, today when Maqsood's grandson asks the same question, he opens up only one hand to show that it's only so big, as we lost the other portion back in 1971.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Newspaper Staff Reporter. “Shanaakht Festival to Begin on 8th.” *Dawn*, April 3, 2009.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/454743/karachi-shanaakht-festival-to-begin-on-8th>.

¹⁸⁷ Translations: *Shanaakht* (Identity), *Sohni Dharti II* (Beautiful Land II), *Apnay Watan ke Saaray Rung* (All the Colors of Our Homeland), *Char Soobay*, *Char Ung* (Four Provinces, Four Fingers).

¹⁸⁸ Saadia Qamar. “An Evening of Satire and Wit with Anwar Maqsood.” *The Express Tribune*, August 31, 2012. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/429180/an-evening-of-satire-and-wit-with-anwar-maqsood>.



Fig 5. 48: An evening of satire and wit with Anwar Maqsood

Source: *Tribune.com*,
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/429180/an-evening-of-satire-and-wit-with-anwar-maqsood>,
 Accessed February 20, 2024.

However, 1971 also carried some improvement as it was the year Imran Khan joined the Pakistani cricket team, showing that not everything was lost. He then narrated a humorous incident from 1986 when he hosted the retirement party of Imran Khan. The event was arranged for half an hour to accommodate General Ziaul Haq's dinner plans with the French ambassador. Nevertheless, it protracted well into the early hours of the morning, much to the annoyance of the General. When opposed about the delay, Maqsood humorously replied;

“Sir, what can I do? You only promised to come for a short time; but you over-stayed at the event. Just like you promised to leave after 90 days, but stayed on for eight years!” According to Maqsood, this quip even elicited a hearty laugh from General Ziaul Haq.”¹⁸⁹

Maqsood, discussed his early writings for the Zia Mohyeddin Show and later narrated stories from political history of Pakistan, particularly during Ziaul Haq's rule. His joke about General Zia's exceptional skill of jumping over "11 chairs" enthused controversy, foremost to a tense come across with military officers. He described interactions with various political figures, counting Benazir Bhutto, Pervez Musharraf and others, sharing visions and witty remarks exchanged with them. On the social and cultural note, he explained the evolution in art pricing, today's conflicting market from earlier. He highlighted the literary influence of Shakaib Jalali on modern Urdu poetry also reciting verses of his and her sister Zehra Nigah. Ending on a positive

¹⁸⁹ Saadia Qamar. “An Evening of Satire and Wit with Anwar Maqsood.” *The Express Tribune*, August 31, 2012.
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/429180/an-evening-of-satire-and-wit-with-anwar-maqsood>.

message, he praised the hospital and expressed hope for Pakistan's potential greatness, urging improvements in national governance. During the question-and-answer session, he criticized budget distribution for health and education and discussed geopolitics, commenting on Kashmir and provincial tensions. Throughout his talk, he tangled personal stories with insightful commentary with a blend of humor, nostalgia, and critique of socio-political issues.¹⁹⁰

Maqsood was appointed as the ambassador of Pakistan Centre in 2013. During an engaging and interactive session with the audience, he committed to overseeing all the paintings at the Pakistan Centre and taking full responsibility for its library. He was awarded with Hilal-e-Imtiaz for his contributions in art and literature (Fig 5.49). Maqsood spoke about his socio-political shows that earned him recognition in the country.¹⁹¹

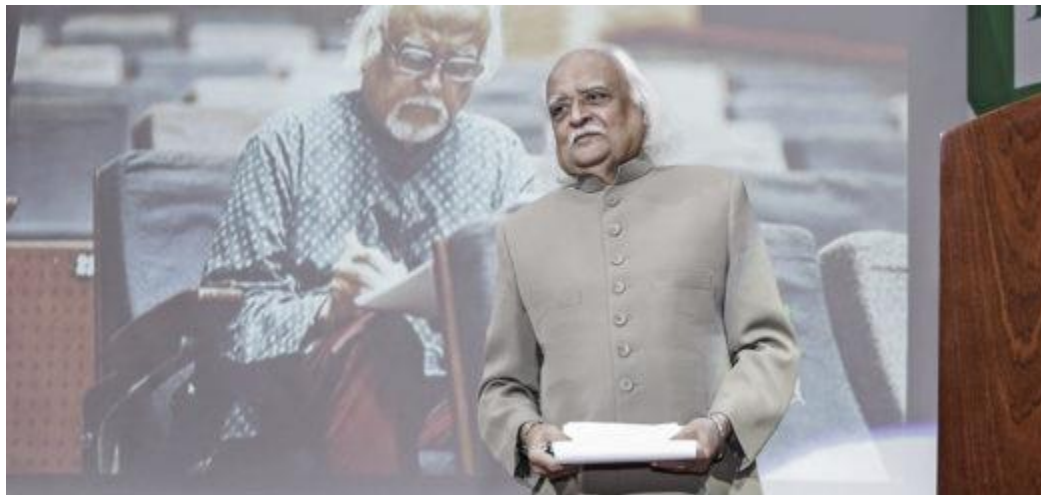


Fig 5. 49: Anwar Maqsood Event - Pakistan Association Dubai
Source: *Pad.ae*,
<https://pad.ae/2020/08/28/anwar-maqsood-event/>, Accessed February 20, 2024.

In 2013, young actors approached Maqsood that included Dawar Mehmood from a production house named KopyKat. They collaborated with Maqsood, and he informed the media about the return of *Aangan Terrha* at the Arts Council Karachi (Fig 5.50). Making a humorous comment on socio-political situation of Pakistan, Maqsood said; “Aangan was crooked in 1983, and it's still crooked in 2013.”¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Peerzada Salman. “Anwar Maqsood on Zia, Sadequain and Angioplasty.” *Dawn*, August 30, 2012.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/745773/anwar-maqsood-on-zia-sadequain-and-angioplasty>.

¹⁹¹ Pakistan Association Dubai. “Anwar Maqsood Event Pakistan Association Dubai.” Accessed February 20, 2024.

<https://pad.ae/2020/08/28/anwar-maqsood-event/>.

¹⁹² Rafay Mahmood. “Anwar Maqsood’s Aangan Terrha to Be Performed for 90 Days.” *The Express Tribune*, February 8, 2013.
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/504543/anwar-maqsoods-aangan-terrha-to-be-performed-for-90-days>.



Fig 5. 50: Anwar Maqsood's Aangan Terrha to be performed for 90 days

Source: *Tribune.com*, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/504543/anwar-maqsoods-aangan-terrha-to-be-performed-for-90-days>, Accessed February 21, 2024.

Maqsood, summarized a 13-episode TV show into a 100-minute stage play. He quoted the KopyKat Productions team, who said, "If you could summarize Pakistan's entire history in 90 minutes for *Pawnay 14 August*, this shouldn't be too difficult."¹⁹³

The original *Aangan Terrha* was a humorous TV show that undertook numerous social issues and indirectly criticized Ziaul Haq's martial law government. The main cast included Salim Nasir, Bushra Ansari, Arshad Mehmood, Shakeel, and Durdana Butt, with Lehri, Moin Akhter, Alamgir, and Qazi Wajid making guest appearances. Maqsood said;

"This time, I want young people to take charge of Aangan Terrha. I could have easily used the original cast, but their situation has improved. The new generation may have its shortcomings, but they should take on Aangan Terrha."¹⁹⁴

Mehmood expressed nervousness and enthusiasm about staging something as brilliantly crafted as *Aangan Terrha*. He mentioned;

"When we started KopyKat Productions, I used to tell my friends that I'd stage Aangan Terrha, but no one took me seriously," said Mehmood. "Today, it feels like my dream has come true because Aangan Terrha was the reason we began doing theatre."¹⁹⁵

Pawnay 14 August, play by Maqsood was performed in Pakistan and overseas. The conference by IBA Alumni UAE Episode brought the prominent play *Pawnay 14 August* by Maqsood, to Dubai and played it at the Dubai Community Theatre and Arts Centre on March 20,

¹⁹³ Rafay Mahmood. "Anwar Maqsood's Aangan Terrha to Be Performed for 90 Days." *The Express Tribune*, February 8, 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/504543/anwar-maqsoods-aangan-terrha-to-be-performed-for-90-days>.

¹⁹⁴ Rafay Mahmood. "Anwar Maqsood's Aangan Terrha to Be Performed for 90 Days." *The Express Tribune*, February 8, 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/504543/anwar-maqsoods-aangan-terrha-to-be-performed-for-90-days>.

¹⁹⁵ Rafay Mahmood. "Anwar Maqsood's Aangan Terrha to Be Performed for 90 Days." *The Express Tribune*, February 8, 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/504543/anwar-maqsoods-aangan-terrha-to-be-performed-for-90-days>.

2014. *Pawnay 14 August* is a thought-provoking story that contrasts the ideal vision of Pakistan with its current reality. The story centers on three principal characters, Quaid-i-Azam, Allama Iqbal, and Maulana Shaukat Ali, who come to see modern-day Pakistan (Fig 5.51). The play has a diverse range of characters representing diverse facets of Pakistani society, including politics, business, military, and the film industry.¹⁹⁶



Fig 5. 51: Anwar Maqsood's *Pawnay 14 August* screened exclusively for IBA Alumni in UAE
Source: *Alumni.iba.edu.pk*,
https://alumni.iba.edu.pk/anwar_maqsood_Pawnay_14_August.php, Accessed February 21, 2024.

Every year on September 6th, Pakistan celebrates Defense Day to honor the country's finest hour when its armed forces thwarted a surprise attack by the numerically superior Indian Armed Force in 1965 (Fig 5.52). On the celebration of Defense Day in 2015, Maqsood was invited as a speaker. During his speech, he recalled the partition, shared childhood memories of witnessing the birth of Pakistan and reflected on the hardships and sacrifices, particularly those made by the army personnel and their families and emphasized that the struggle is collective and urged everyone to respect the sacrifices that were made. He concluded his speech with an emotional poem and extended his commiserations for Pakistan and its army.¹⁹⁷



Fig 5. 52: 6th September 2015 Anwar Maqsood's Speech made Generals Cry
Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x358puk>, Accessed February 22, 2024.

¹⁹⁶ Alumni IBA. "Anwar Maqsood's *Pawnay 14 August* Screened Exclusively for IBA Alumni in UAE." *Alumni IBA*, March 20, 2014, https://alumni.iba.edu.pk/anwar_maqsood_Pawnay_14_August.php.

¹⁹⁷ Basra. "Anwar Maqsood's Speech Made Generals Cry 6th September 2015." *Dailymotion*, September 6, 2015, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x358puk>.

Maqsood was a chief guest at the Universal Urdu Mushaira held in Sydney on May 7, 2016, at the Civic Theatre. The event featured Maqsood, along with other prominent overseas poets. Additionally, several renowned poets from various Australian states recited their latest poetry. Maqsood spoke about his play writing that tackle sensitive and social issues.¹⁹⁸ He talked about his famous works that include, *Fifty Fifty*, *Aangan Terha*, *Half Plate*, *Studio Dhaai*, *Talaash*, *Sitara Aur Mehrunnisa*, *Nadan Nadia*, *Loose Talk*, *Hum Pe Jo Guzarti Hai*, among others.¹⁹⁹

On August 14, 2016, the Pakistan Centre project comprising of a Pakistan Medical Centre, a health and fitness center, restaurant, mosque, seminar rooms, and offices was launched. Maqsood visited the Pakistani community in UAE where they were captivated by his live recitals and humorous skits, for instance *Sawa 14 August* and *Anwar Maqsood Ka Dharna*. He laid the first brick for the Pakistan Medical Centre in Dubai, approving it as a noteworthy milestone. He acknowledged the centre for providing free medical care and sees it as an extraordinary determination by Pakistani doctors to showcase the humane side of the nation (Fig 5.53). The theme was titled ‘Own a Brick,’ which gave people the chance to engrave their names in support of the community cause.

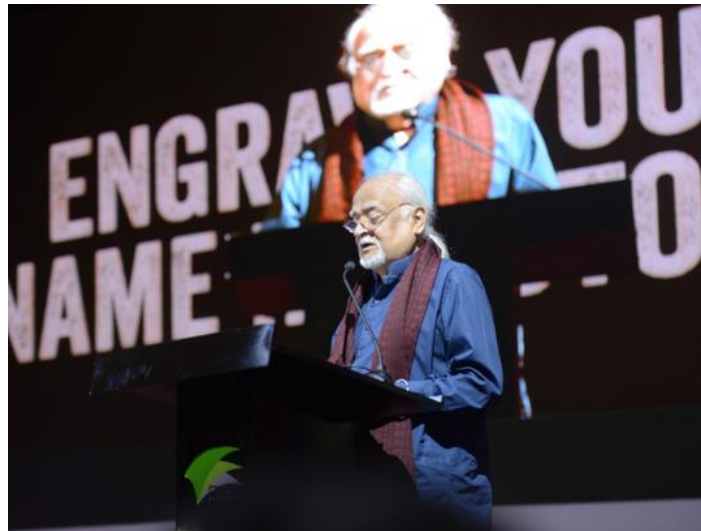


Fig 5. 53: Pakistan Association in Dubai to welcome the Ambassador of Pakistan Centre Anwar Maqsood
Source: *Gulfnews.com*, <https://gulfnews.com/entertainment/arts-culture/anwar-maqsood-rallies-for-pakistan-centre-in-dubai-1.2130379>, Accessed February 22, 2024.

Maqsood, captured the audience with his signature ironic comedy. He emphasized how this project will be written in history in “golden letters.” Maqsood additionally said.

¹⁹⁸ Sada-e-Watan Sydney. “Anwar Maqsood Will Be Chief Guest of Universal Urdu Mushaira in Sydney on Saturday.” *Sada-e-Watan Sydney*, May 7, 2016, <https://www.sadaewatansydney.com/anwarmaqsood1.htm>.

¹⁹⁹ *Talaash* (The Search), *Nadan Nadia* (Innocent Nadia), *Hum Pe Jo Guzarti Hai* (What We Endure).

“I feel humbled to be declared as an ambassador and want each and every individual of the community to participate in the noble cause, He added that the community should thank the UAE government for providing an environment and platform for such activities. I pray that this project be completed soon and upon my next visit I wish to see it inaugurated.”²⁰⁰

At the event, his wife Imrana Maqsood joined him on stage and read a few pages from her book *Uljhay Suljhay Anwar* (Fig 5.54).²⁰¹ Afterwards, signed copies of the book by Maqsood were available to the audience.



Fig 5. 54: Anwar Maqsood and Imrana share the stage in Pakistan Auditorium at Pakistan Association in Dubai
Source: *Gulfnews.com*, <https://gulfnews.com/entertainment/arts-culture/anwar-maqsood-rallies-for-pakistan-centre-in-dubai-1.2130379>, Accessed February 28, 2024.

In 2016, Maqsood hosted the book launch of "Raag Music" by Ustad Shahid Hamid at the Arts Council. After congratulating the author on the book launch, Maqsood shared his views on the Panama Leaks and *Darbar-e-Akbari* in his witty style, leaving the audience in fits of laughter (Fig 5.55). He narrated a fictional story he had written, where he humorously referred;

“Nawaz Sharif as "Taan Shen" and depicted him entering the darbar with full protocol. Instead of the requested Raag Shanani, the opposition asked seven melodious questions from him, demanding Raag Panama instead.”²⁰²

Maqsood cleverly mixed puns related to music and the socio-political situation, delivering them with his signature witty dialogue.

²⁰⁰ Staff Report. “Anwar Maqsood Rallies for Pakistan Centre in Dubai.” *Gulf News*, November 25, 2017, <https://gulfnews.com/entertainment/arts-culture/anwar-maqsood-rallies-for-pakistan-centre-in-dubai-1.2130379>.

²⁰¹ Translation: *Uljhay Suljhay Anwar* (Entangled, Untangled Anwar).

²⁰² Voice Pk. “Anwar Maqsood Views on Panama Leaks and Darbar-e-Akbari.” Posted 2016, Dailymotion, 3:00, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4dbv66>.

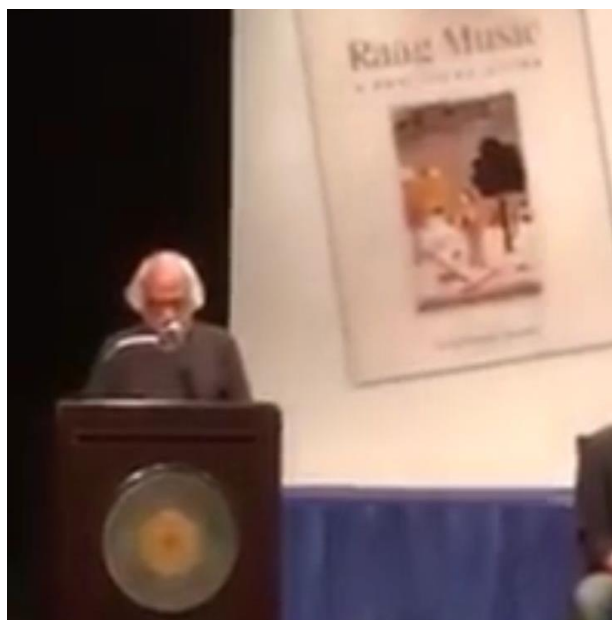


Fig 5. 55: Anwar Maqsood Views on Panama Leaks and Darbar-e-Akbari
Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4dbv66>, Accessed February 28, 2024.

The 5th Islamabad Literature Festival held on 16 April 2017 featured Maqsood as one of the guest speakers, he was accompanied by his wife Imrana Maqsood and son Bilal Maqsood (Fig 5.56). Maqsood humorously discussed the overpopulation of Pakistan, while he and Imrana reminisced about their fond memories of Moin Akhtar. Bilal read excerpts from a book written about Anwar by Imrana. The session concluded with question and answers, where the audience asked funny and interactive questions. Responding to one question, Maqsood remarked;

"Getting a degree in Pakistan got me nothing. If I had known I could achieve what I have now, I would have never gone to university. I got my first job from Commendation."²⁰³



Fig 5. 56: Anwar Maqsood I I Am Poor Too I But His Family Belongs To The Fakirs
Source: *Youtube.com*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRhCRFYWC0>, Accessed March 1, 2024.

²⁰³ Agay Ki Khabar. "Anwar Maqsood, I Am Poor Too but His Family Belongs to the Fakirs." Posted February 24, 2024, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRhCRFYWC0>.

On October 24, 2017 Maqsood, Hasan, and Mehmood held a press conference at the Karachi Arts Council to discuss the play *Hua Kuch Yoon* (Fig 5.57).²⁰⁴ The play was a love story set in the pre- and post-Partition era, across 80 years, which took Hassan two years to write. He also praised Maqsood by comparing him to Woody Allen and calling him a greater and better writer. Mehmood also spoke about the power of Maqsood's plays, noting that the impact of Maqsood's lines remains strong irrespective of the performance of actors. He expressed his pledge to the Pakistan's theatre industry. He added; "The play has 100 years of politics, and I am very hopeful that this play will be a success, it will run for two months in Karachi".²⁰⁵

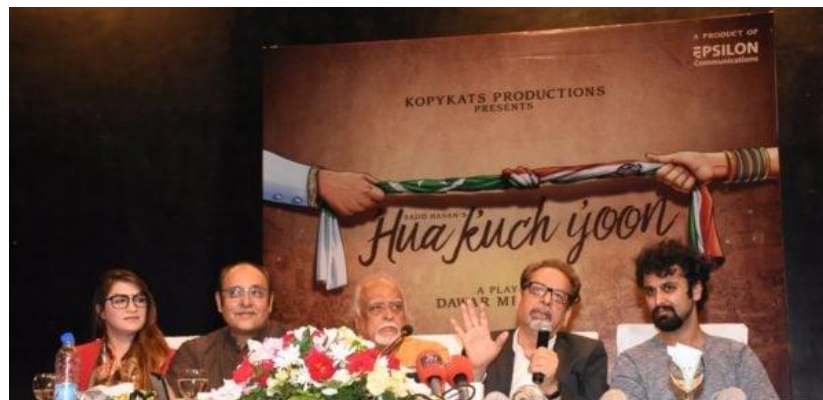


Fig 5. 57: Press conference in Arts Council Karachi for Play *Hua Kuch Yoon*

Source: *Tribune.com.pk*,

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1540911/anwar-maqsood-bigger-better-writer-woody-allen-sajid-hasan>,
Accessed March 1, 2024.

During the question-and-answer session, Maqsood was asked about his upcoming film with fashion designer Asim Jofa, which was directed by Sarmad Khoosat and featured a young sarangi player known as Nawab Sahab and he replied, "I have completed the script but Asim Jofa is a businessman and he left without saying yes or no to me. Though the writer later confirmed that Jofa will still be doing his film."²⁰⁶

A press conference held on July 5, 2018 for Maqsood and Dawar Mehmood's theater play *Kiyun Nikala* was held at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi (Fig 5.58).²⁰⁷ Maqsood spoke to the press and addressed questions regarding the play. Maqsood incorporated Nawaz Sharif's popular dialogue *Mujhe Kyun Nikala* into his witty play, due to its political importance and

²⁰⁴ Translation: *Hua Kuch Yoon* (It Happened Like This).

²⁰⁵ Arsalan Ali. "Sarmad Khoosat to Direct Anwar Maqsood's Script for Big Screen." *Behtareen*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.behtareen.pk/14934sarmad-khoosat-direct-anwar-maqsood-script-big-screen/>.

²⁰⁶ Rahul Aijaz. "Anwar Maqsood Is a Bigger and Better Writer than Woody Allen: Sajid Hasan." *The Express Tribune*, October 25, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1540911/anwar-maqsood-bigger-better-writer-woody-allen-sajid-hasan>.

²⁰⁷ Translation: *Kiyun Nikala* (Why was I removed).

reference which caught the attention of the audience.²⁰⁸ Though, the play has nothing to do with Nawaz Sharif himself and that Maqsood had named the play beforehand the phrase became widespread. Maqsood sarcastically remarked, “*Jis Waqt Nawaz Sharif Paida Huwe, Kash Usi Waqt Keh Dete Mujhe Kyun Nikala.*”²⁰⁹

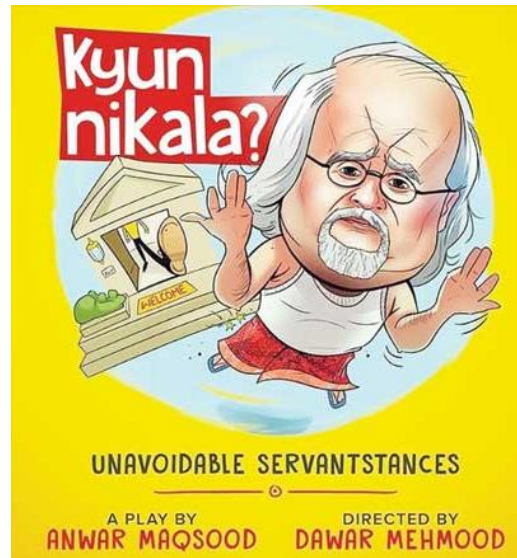


Fig 4. 58: Play Kyun Nikala

Source: *Thenews.com*,

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/566095-men-behind-curtain>, Accessed March 3, 2024.

Maqsood once narrated about the play and its story in the following words,

"The play follows the story of a Bengali cook who is employed at one of the minister's house in Punjab for 30 years," he informed while offering me a cup of tea. "The minister fires him for some reason hence I named the play Kyun Nikala. Then Mian sahab said 'Kyun Nikala' so everyone is wondering if the play is about him. It is not about any one political party. The elections took place after the script was finalized but I had told the results then only. I haven't made any changes to the script post elections. The circumstances I have penned in the script, they are relevant to the current political scenario of Pakistan. It's a light comedy just the way I write, a fusion of humour and satire."²¹⁰

Khuda Hafiz was a lively session featured by Maqsood on September 14, 2018. In this session, he humorously critiques the political system and leaders such as Malik Riaz, Nawaz Sharif, and Shahbaz Sharif suggesting that an event with these figures would keep the audience

²⁰⁸ Pakroyal. "Jis Waqt Nawaz Sharif Paida Huwe, Kash Usi Waqt Keh Dete Mujhe Kyun Nikala - Anwar Maqsood." *U News Tv*, December 28, 2017.

²⁰⁹ Translation: *Jis Waqt Nawaz Sharif Paida Huwe, Kash Usi Waqt Keh Dete Mujhe Kyun Nikala.* (When Nawaz Sharif was born, if only he had said at that moment, 'Why did you oust me?').

²¹⁰ Buraq Shabbir. "Men Behind the Curtain." *The News*, August 12, 2018, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/566095-men-behind-curtain>.

applauding non-stop (Fig 5.59).²¹¹ Maqsood also played tribute to legendary literary figures like Faiz Ahmad Faiz, highlighting the significance of Urdu language. His comments intermingled with comedy were appreciated, showcasing his deep appreciation for cultural icons and his ability for delivering memorable comedic lines.²¹²



Fig 5. 59: Anwar Maqsood, Aalimi Urdu Conference Session Khuda Hafiz
Source: *Youtube.com*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRLJJ0jR-Pw>, Accessed March 3, 2024.

On November 22, 2018, the third session of the 11th World Urdu Conference was held. The conference had a segment titled *Anwar Maqsood kay Sath*.²¹³ During the session, Maqsood honored literary figures for instance Jaun Elia, Mushtaq Ahmad Yousafi, Mir Taqi Mir, and Mirza Ghalib, and presented his tributes with his signature wit and expression. The audience thoroughly enjoyed Maqsood's humor and his captivating prose (Fig 5.60).

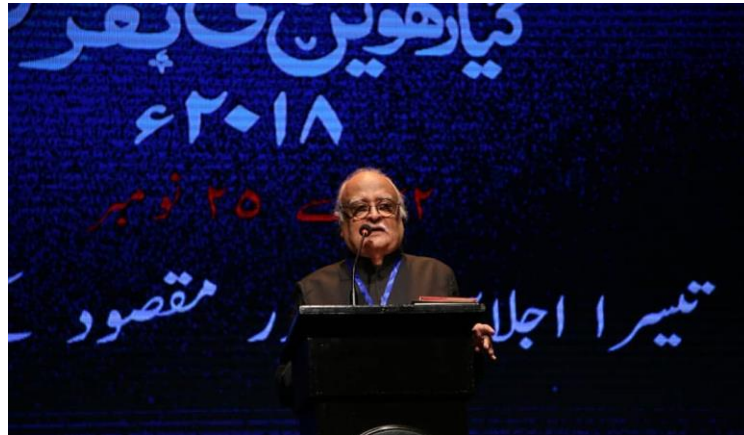


Fig 5. 60: The third session of 11th International Urdu Conference Anwar Maqsood kay saath
Source: *Instagram.com*, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BqfS4CNnFfU/?igsh=MWZqbWF2YzBuMTFsZQ==>,
Accessed March 3, 2024.

²¹¹ Translation: Khuda Hafiz (Goodbye).

²¹² Daniyal Umer. "Anwar Maqsood at Aalimi Urdu Conference Session Khuda Hafiz." Posted September 14, 2018, YouTube, 29:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRLJJ0jR-Pw>.

²¹³ Translation: Anwar Maqsood kay Sath (With Anwar Maqsood).

The program, I am Karachi purposes to rebuild Karachi's diverse social and cultural fabric by providing a platform for organizations and individuals dedicated to encouraging peace through arts, culture, sports, and dialogue. On Dec 17, 2018, Maqsood participated in the event for a closing speech where he humorously started with a saying, "The program is 'I am Karachi,' but if I say 'Me too,' it might cause trouble" (Fig 5.61). He started by reflecting on his early life and discussed Karachi's developing crime scenarios, noticing how the dynamics between police and robbers have shifted over the years.

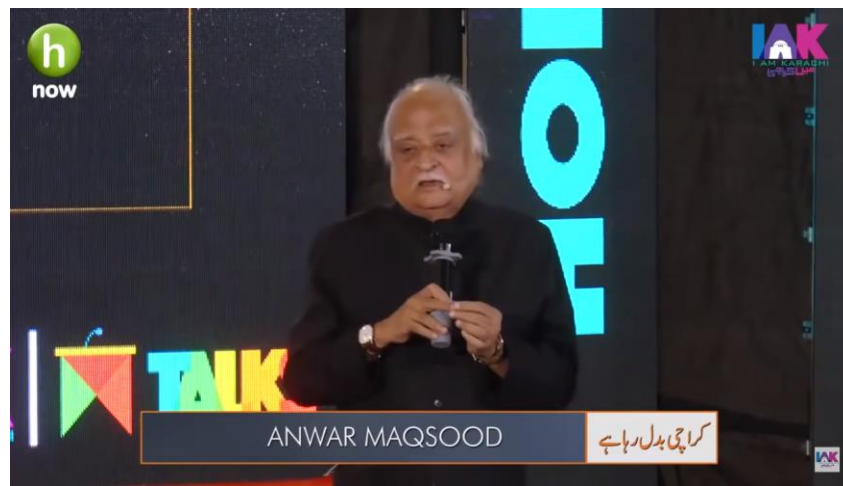


Fig 5. 61: Anwar Maqsood Iak talks 7.0

Source: *Youtube.com*,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhJbUMuS_04, Accessed March 4, 2024.

He addressed innumerable issues such as rain, electricity, employment, and garbage disposal, highlighting Pakistan's minimal budget for education. He humorously noted that when Pervez Musharraf made obtaining a BA degree obligatory, half of Pakistan suddenly became BA holders. He shared anecdotes ranging from childhood memories to experiences from school, all delivered with his trademark wit and storytelling. He credited Khawaja Moin ud Din for teaching him comedy and his elder sister for conveying serious writing skills. He touched the topic on the Tabligh movement in Pakistan, accentuation its origins in Bani Gali. He commended Imran Khan for his efforts towards Pakistan's progress and concluded by appreciating the "I am Karachi" initiative, asserting that Karachi belongs to everyone and encouraging all to proudly proclaim, "My Karachi."²¹⁴

²¹⁴ I am Karachi. "Anwar Maqsood IAK Talks 7.0." Posted December 17, 2018, YouTube, 21:41, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhJbUMuS_04.

Naach Na Jaane Aangan Terha, a political satire written by Maqsood in 2019, served as a spinoff to his 1984 play *Aangan Terha* (Fig 5.62).²¹⁵ The play explores numerous political times in the history of Pakistan, commencing with the ease of time before Ayub Khan. The play had three main characters; husband, wife and a helper. In spite of their modest means and lack of offspring, the couple was happy and considered the helper as part of their family. Over hilarious interactions and affectionate banter, the play highlights the absolute love between them, especially with the servant, who considers himself more as a family member.



Fig 5. 62: Naach Na Jaaney

Source: *Dailytimes.com*,

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/458932/naach-na-jaaney-is-a-political-satire/>, Accessed March 4, 2024.

As the play progresses into Bhutto's era, it portrays a time of artistic freedom and success. A new character, Sufi was introduced as a director manipulating young girls under the guise of business. This period is juxtaposed with Zia regime, marked by liberalism and hypocrisy, despite his claims of making Pakistan an Islamic Republic. The play also touches on other political leaders, noticing how appearances can be misleading. Pervaiz Musharraf's military coup strengthened the army but weakened the civil sector, while era of Imran Khan is described as another series of false promises. The play ends with the death of the servant, making the audience sentimental, while the main theme is the transition between political eras and the resulting societal changes. Characters such as the fraud doctor, the politician, the director, the honest Mehboob Ahmed, the simple wife, and servant himself represent innumerable qualities and vices (Fig 5.63). The play highlights forgiveness and overwhelming flaws, promoting a world of love and generosity.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Translation: Naach Na Jaane Aangan Terha (The dancer who doesn't know how to dance blames the crooked courtyard).

²¹⁶ Beenish Mahmood. "Naach Na Jaaney' Is a Political Satire." *Daily Times*, September 2, 2019, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/458932/naach-na-jaaney-is-a-political-satire/>.



Fig 5. 63: Actors perform stage drama Naach na Jaane at PNCA

Source: *Tribune.com.pk*,

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2022259/pnca-stages-naach-na-jaane>, Accessed March 4, 2024.

Overall, *Naach Na Jaane Aangan Terha* offered a rich experience for literature lovers through its insightful commentary on Pakistan's political history and its engaging combination of humor and drama. The play was staged at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi and an announcement was made during a press conference by Maqsood, Yasir Hussain, and Ahmed Shah on January 3, 2019 (Fig 5.64). Maqsood said, "All the funds collected from the play will go to artists that don't have work or are too old to earn a living". Shah added, "Arts Council has always provided artist with every help possible, this initiative will go forth and establish a fund that will enable us to do even more for them in the future."²¹⁷



Fig 5. 64: Anwar Maqsood speaks at the press conference on Thursday

Source: *Dawn.com*, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1455311>, Accessed March 4, 2024.

²¹⁷ Acpkhiofficial. "Press Conference of Arts Council's First Theater Play Production Naach Na Janaay." *Instagram*, January 3, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BsKzxo_nmVK/?igsh=dGs4YnNscHB1NHF1&img_index=1.

On March 3rd 2019, Maqsood addressed the 10th Karachi Literature Festival (KLF), during his session he promoted his play *Naach Na Janay* as the Arts Council's first theatre production (Fig 5.65).

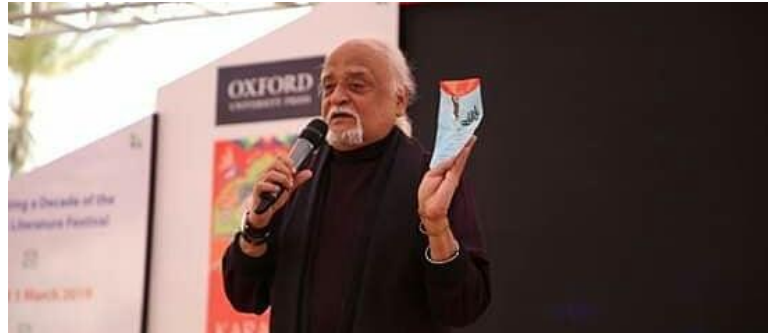


Fig 5. 65: Arts Council's first theatre production "Naach Na Janay" by Anwer Maqsood, Directed by Dawar
Source: *Instagram.com*, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bui5hNuAmK8/?img_index=1, Accessed March 5, 2024.

On April 4, 2019, Maqsood, announced he will be introducing a new stage play titled *Naya Pakistan*, following the success of *Naach Na Jaanay*. Speaking at a press conference at Arts Council Karachi, he revealed about writing this new drama, which will debut on Independence Day (Fig 5.66).²¹⁸ Given its admiration, there are plans to present this stage show in South Africa after its inauguration in the United Arab Emirates. He added,

“The play revolves around the current state of the country. The main character is a street vendor who sells the old Pakistan and ushers in the new. He emphasized that Allama Iqbal's character will also feature in the play. Maqsood added that *Naya Pakistan* has been showcased before under a different title.”²¹⁹



Fig 5. 66: Press conference for Anwar Maqsood new play *Naya Pakistan* for Independence Day held at the ACP
Source: *Behtareen.pk*, <https://www.behtareen.pk/anwar-maqsood-upcoming-play-naya-pakistan/>, Accessed March 5, 2024.

²¹⁸ Translation: *Naya Pakistan* (New Pakistan).

²¹⁹ Syed, Sheherbano. “Anwar Maqsood Announces Another Stage Play *Naya Pakistan*.” *Daily Pakistan Global*, April 4, 2019, <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/04-Apr-2019/anwar-maqsood-announces-another-stage-play-naya-pakistan?amp>.

On November 2, 2019, the 6th Oxford Alumni Festival took place in Islamabad, where Maqsood captivated the spectators with his wit and sarcasm (Fig 5.67). He began with a sharp comment, humorously mentioning figures like Molana Fazlur Rehman and Imran Khan. When asked if he had penned Imran Khan's popular slogan *Tabdeeli Aai Hai*.²²⁰ Maqsood jokingly replied that he could never write such a slogan because the word "*Tabdeeli*" in the dictionary means to change, transfer, or alter how could I endorse that? In jest, when encouraged to create a slogan for Molana Tariq, he wrote "*Tablighi Aai Ray*" but then sarcastically cautioned not to associate his name with it and noted that this slogan shouldn't be paired with music. Throughout the conversation, he sprinkled in witty anecdotes and observations, touching upon Pakistan's loan situation and ending with a humorous narration of a fictitious letter from Iqbal, highlighting the dilemma of poets in the country.²²¹



Fig 5. 67: Anwar Maqsood at its Best Oxford 2019

Source: *Youtube.com*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXIGcBEEg7w>, Accessed March 6, 2024.

Maqsood, known for his active participation in live shows and conferences, concluded a successful run of his play in 2019 *Naach Na Jaanay* in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad.²²² He had a spotlight with a one-man show called *Faqat Anwar*, presenting storytelling, letter reading, and recitations by Maqsood himself live at the Arts Council (Fig 5.68).²²³

²²⁰ Translation: *Tabdeeli Aai Hai* (Change Has Arrived).

²²¹ EPL News Today. "Anwar Maqsood at Its Best, Oxford 2019." *YouTube*, November 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXIGcBEEg7w>.

²²² "Anwar Maqsood to Perform Live on Stage This Month." *Mag the Weekly*, November 16, 2019, <https://magtheweekly.com/detail/7130-anwar-maqsood-to-perform-live-on-stage-this-month>.

²²³ Buraq Shabbir. "Anwar Maqsood to Perform Live at Arts Council." *The News*, accessed March 7, 2024, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/instep-today/551033-anwar-maqsood-to-perform-live-at-arts-council>.

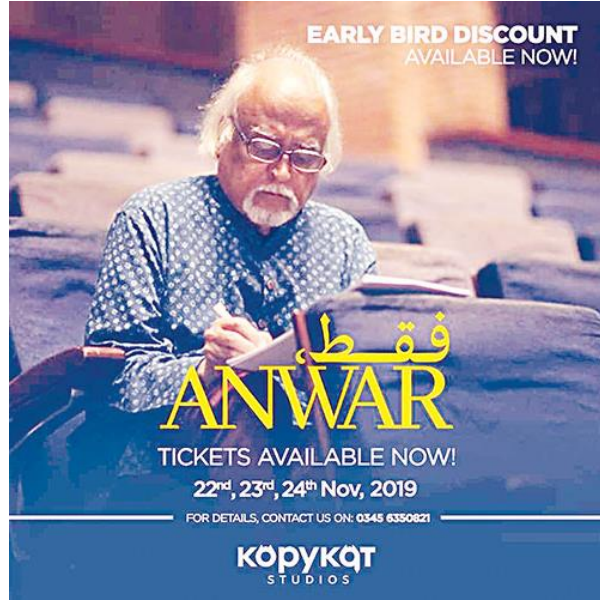


Fig 5. 68: Anwar Maqsood to perform live at Arts Council

Source: *Thenews.com.pk*, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/instep-today/551033-anwar-maqsood-to-perform-live-at-arts-council>, Accessed March 6, 2024.

From November 5th till 8th 2019, at the 12th Aalmi Urdu Conference, Maqsood delivered a talk based on a witty conversation between two characters, Mohsin and Faraz. Their humorous dialogue revolved around the experiences and peculiarities of a flight, showcasing Maqsood's signature wit and storytelling (Fig 5.69).

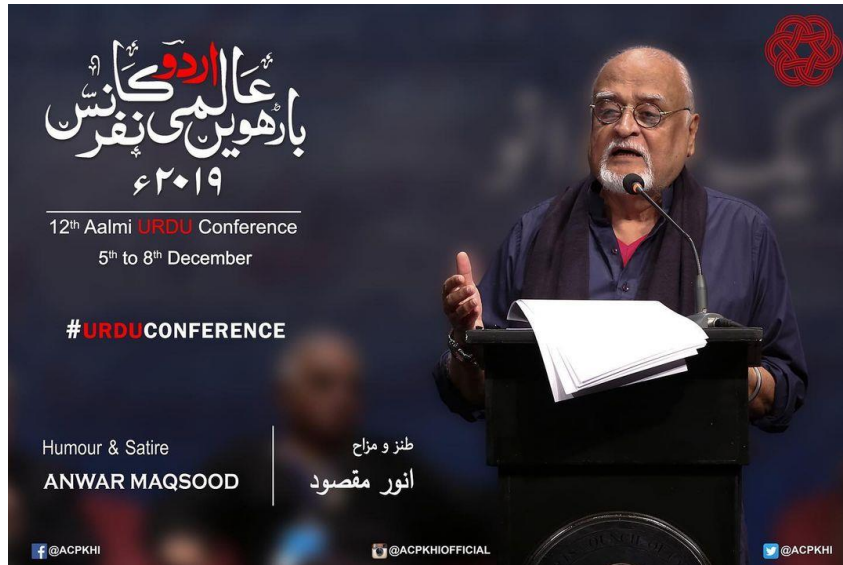


Fig 5. 69: Anwar Maqsood's most awaited performance of the year in 12th Aalmi Urdu Conference

Source: *Instagram.com*, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B5KyJ6qBmra/?igsh=MXBlani0ZG8xYWMweg%3D%3D>, Accessed March 7, 2024.

In 2019, he underlined the play's importance based on significant discussions between Jinnah and Gandhi in the backdrop of the prior British Empire. He expressed confidence in the play's success despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic on cultural activities (Fig 5.70). Dawar Mahmood addressed Maqsood as a national legend and guaranteed the audience that expectations would be met. Salman Hussain resonated these sentiments and promised to continue support for the development of art and culture alongside Maqsood.²²⁴ When speaking to The News correspondent, he was asked. What does the play have for audiences? Maqsood responded,

"The play is about whether the partition of India was the right thing. "Who broke India? Gandhi or Quaid?" it would leave the audiences thinking if the partition was better for the Muslims or not. "What would have happened had they lived in India?"²²⁵

When asked if he plans to write a play with the name August 14, he said, "He wrote *Pawnay* 14 August, then *Sawa* 14 August, and finally *Saadhay* 14 August, and if there ever came a true 14 August, he would write one."²²⁶ According to Shabbir, "*Saadhay* 14 August is a reminder of how theatre remains a unique form of performing arts despite having a niche audience."²²⁷ Tanveer Gill, who played the part of Gandhi said, "The transition sequences featuring various locations were particularly heartwarming, keeping audiences on the edge of their seats."²²⁸

At a press conference at the PNCA, the organizers announced that *Saadhay* 14 August was ready to bring laughter and satire to the capital, while Maqsood stated,

"This series is really close to my heart and was made with a positive outlook, considering the current plight of the nation. We expect that Saadhay 14 August will receive the same level of support in Islamabad as it had in Karachi."²²⁹

²²⁴ Rafiq Vayani. "Arts Council and Kopykats Productions Announces to Hold Theater Play Saadhay 14 August." *Biz Today*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.biztoday.news/2022/02/16/arts-council-and-kopykats-productions-announces-to-hold-theater-play-saadhay-14-august/>.

²²⁵ Rafiq Vayani. "Arts Council and Kopykats Productions Announces to Hold Theater Play Saadhay 14 August." *Biz Today*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.biztoday.news/2022/02/16/arts-council-and-kopykats-productions-announces-to-hold-theater-play-saadhay-14-august/>.

²²⁶ Rafiq Vayani. "Arts Council and Kopykats Productions Announces to Hold Theater Play Saadhay 14 August." *Biz Today*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.biztoday.news/2022/02/16/arts-council-and-kopykats-productions-announces-to-hold-theater-play-saadhay-14-august/>.

²²⁷ Rafiq Vayani. "Arts Council and Kopykats Productions Announces to Hold Theater Play Saadhay 14 August." *Biz Today*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.biztoday.news/2022/02/16/arts-council-and-kopykats-productions-announces-to-hold-theater-play-saadhay-14-august/>.

²²⁸ Rafiq Vayani. "Arts Council and Kopykats Productions Announces to Hold Theater Play Saadhay 14 August." *Biz Today*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.biztoday.news/2022/02/16/arts-council-and-kopykats-productions-announces-to-hold-theater-play-saadhay-14-august/>.

²²⁹ Staff Reporter. "Anwar Maqsood's Saadhay 14 August to Be Staged at PNCA for a Month." *Dawn*, January 7, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1730275>.

Shah added, "Anwar Maqsood has actually brought theatre back to Islamabad, and when it is his screenplay, we are sure it will be adored and admired by the public and would draw huge crowds to the theatre."²³⁰



Fig 5. 70: Anwar Maqsood briefs media about the stage play *Saadhay* 14 August at the PNCA in Islamabad
Source: *Dawn.com*,
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1730275>, Accessed March 8, 2024.

On January 10, 2020, Gymkhana Karachi organized an event in honor of Ahmed Shah, the President of the Arts Council for recognizing his contributions to arts and culture. Maqsood was the keynote speaker who entertained the audience with his witty stories and engaging conversation (Fig 5.71).



Fig 5. 71: A reception in honor of President Arts Council Ahmed Shah on his services for Arts & Culture
Source: *Instagram.com*, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7I9psLBUub/?igsh=MWJ3Z3lpc2xwMzZ2Mw==>,
Accessed March 8, 2024.

²³⁰ Staff Reporter. "Anwar Maqsood's *Saadhay 14 August* to Be Staged at PNCA for a Month." *Dawn*, January 7, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1730275>.

On October 24, 2020, Maqsood was the chief guest at the Karachi Theatre Festival 2020. He along with other members awarded shields to the directors and students who took part in theatre, plays, projects, and workshops (Fig 5.72).



Fig 5. 72: Karachi Theatre Festival 2020, Veteran writer Anwar Maqsood was the chief guest of the evening and he awarded shields along with President ACP Ahmed Shah. Source: Instagram.com, https://www.instagram.com/p/CGuLurxBhIH/?img_index=5, Accessed March 8, 2024.

During the 13th Aalimi Urdu Conference held from December 3rd to 6th, 2020, at the Arts Council, Anwar Maqsood engaged in a session titled *Anwar Maqsood se Guftagu*.²³¹ The session was marked by his trademark witty conversation (Fig 5.73).

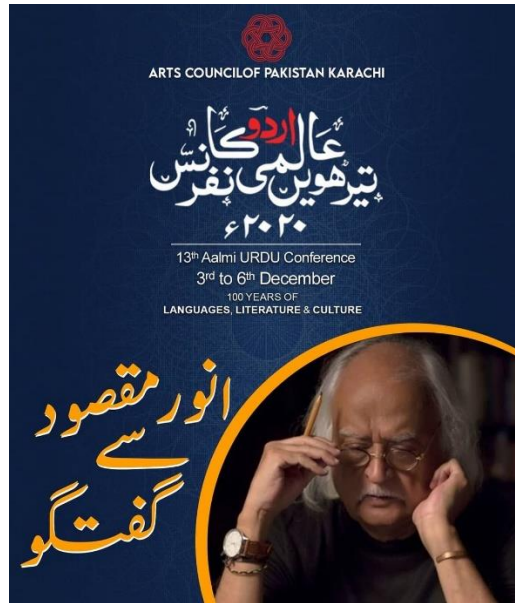


Fig 5. 73: 13th Aalimi Urdu Conference Anwar Maqsood se Guftagu
Source: Instagram.com, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CH7WXiEhAWm/?igsh=OWQ5djBucDkyaHV0>, Accessed March 8, 2024.

²³¹ Translation: Anwar Maqsood se Guftagu (Conversation with Anwar Maqsood).

On March 16, 2021, Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, the iconic Sufi singer, musician, and Qawwal, was honored with a lifetime achievement award. Rahat expressed his gratitude by saying;

“I am honored to be accepting this award by Arts Council, a world-renowned institute of Arts & Culture. I cannot put my feelings into words for the honor bestowed on me.” He added, “Anwar Maqsood is my mentor. He is the legend of words and stories. It is not less than an honor for me to speak in front of him. Ahmad Shah chose beautiful words for my introduction.”²³²

During the conference, Maqsood had an engaging talk with Rahat Fateh Ali (Fig 5.74). He humorously remarked;

"Rahat Fateh Ali Khan has been singing for a long time, but it is surprising to give him this award at this age; he is still very young. This award should be given to those who are involved in NAB cases."²³³

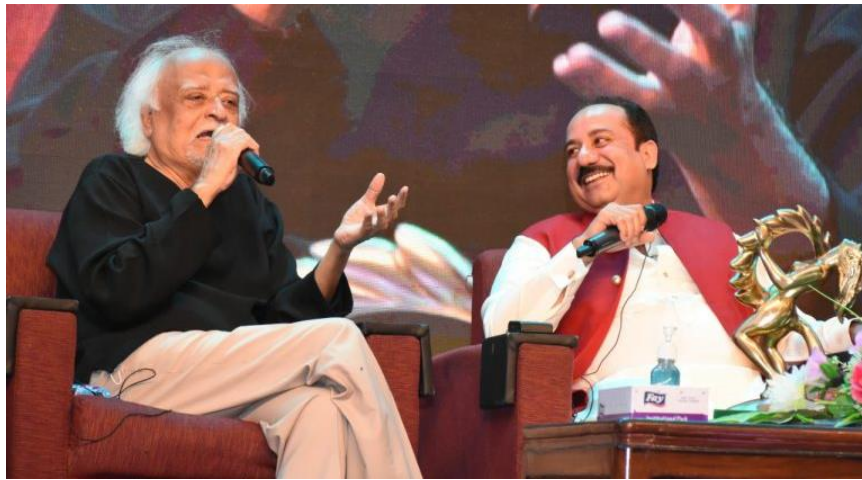


Fig 5. 74: Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Anwar Maqsood had a conversation filled with comedy and wit at the Arts Council of Pakistan in Karachi. Source: *Artscouncil.org.pk*, <https://www.artscouncil.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/c3f6044a-b90c-4b31-bda5-ace1a853ce10-768x557.jpg>, Accessed March 8, 2024.

Every year the Aalml Urdu Conference brings together intellectuals from around the world to celebrate languages and literature. This conference not only tributes Urdu literature but also classifies the ironic literary legacy of the several languages spoken in Pakistan. In 2021, Maqsood conducted a remarkable session titled *Main aur Pakistan* at the 14th Aalml Urdu Conference held at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi.²³⁴ He began with poetry and expressed his gratitude to the audience for their continuous attendance over the four days. Maqsood reminisced about Zia Moin

²³² “Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Awarded with the Lifetime Achievement & Honorary Membership.” *Arts Council of Pakistan*, March 16, 2021, <https://www.artscouncil.org.pk/index.php/2021/03/16/ustad-rahata-fateh-ali-awarded-with-the-lifetime-achievement-honorary-membership/>.

²³³ “Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Awarded with the Lifetime Achievement & Honorary Membership.” *Arts Council of Pakistan*, March 16, 2021, <https://www.artscouncil.org.pk/index.php/2021/03/16/ustad-rahata-fateh-ali-awarded-with-the-lifetime-achievement-honorary-membership/>.

²³⁴ Translation: Main aur Pakistan (Me and Pakistan).

ud Din and concluded the session with a humorous tale involving his friend Shah. Their conversation cleverly touched upon Urdu literature, the Pakistan army, Covid-19, and the economic situation of the country.²³⁵ He also recited a poem titled *Hum Pa Jo Guzarti Hai*, which encapsulated the hardships of life and the current state of the nation (Fig 5.75).²³⁶

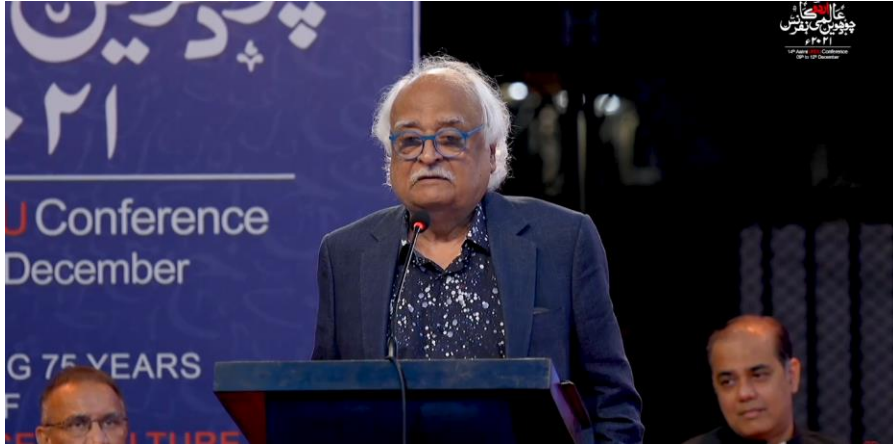


Fig 5. 75: Anwar Maqsood, Main Aur Pakistan Day 04 14th Aalimi Urdu Conference
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mORIQF32s3Yk>, Accessed March 8, 2024.

The Arts Council of Pakistan and Kopykats Productions showed the final chapter of *Saadhay 14 August*. In May 2022 it was premiered in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. During a press conference attended by Maqsood along with Muhammad Ahmad Shah, Dawar Mahmood, and Salman Hussain (Fig 5.76), Maqsood narrated the evolution of the series. Beginning with *Ponay 14 August* and followed by *Sawa 14 August*, the series concludes with *Saadhay 14 August*. This final part explores the historical divide between India and Pakistan, depicting Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Gandhi's travel journey to Kashmir, Lahore, Delhi and closing with a flight to London.²³⁷ On this event, Maqsood said, “We did *Ponay 14 August*, people said why not 14th August; I said we will announce on 14th August, three years after we did *Sawa 14 August*, this is the last episode of this series.”²³⁸

²³⁵ Arts Council of Pakistan. “Anwar Maqsood Main Aur Pakistan Day 04 14th Aalimi Urdu Conference.” Posted January 24, 2022, YouTube, 18:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mORIQF32s3Yk>.

²³⁶ Translation: Hum Pa Jo Guzarti Hai (What Happens to us).

²³⁷ Translation: Poonay 14 August (Quarter to 14th August), Sawa 14 August (A Quarter Past 14th August) and Saadhay 14 August (Half-Past 14th August).

²³⁸ Rafiq Vayani. “Arts Council and Kopykats Productions Announces to Hold Theater Play Saadhay 14 August.” *Biz Today*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.biztoday.news/2022/02/16/arts-council-and-kopykats-productions-announces-to-hold-theater-play-saadhay-14-august/>.



Fig 5. 76: President Acp Mohammad, Dawar Mehmood, and Salman Hussain today conducted a press conference for upcoming play saadhay 14 august written by Anwar Maqsood, at arts council of Pakistan
Source: *Biztoday.news*, <https://www.biztoday.news/2022/02/16/arts-council-and-kopykats-productions-announces-to-hold-theater-play-saadhay-14-august/>, Accessed March 10, 2024.

The Pakistan Theatre Festival at the Arts Council in Karachi featured 45 dramas, workshops, and talks during the month by 27 national and seven international groups in different languages. The festival had genera such as comedy, tragedy, suspense, and political satire.²³⁹ Maqsood along with various personalities attended the event (Fig 5.77). Maqsood was honored with a shield by Arts Council President for his contributions to Pakistani culture and theatre.²⁴⁰



Fig 5. 77: Pakistan Theatre Festival kicks off with Abdullah and Patriot
Source: *Tribune.com.pk*, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2434967/pakistan-theatre-festival-kicks-off-with-abdullah-and-patriot>, Accessed March 10, 2024.

²³⁹ Fauha Khan. "Pakistan Theatre Festival Kicks off with Abdullah and Patriot." *The Express Tribune*, September 9, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2434967/pakistan-theatre-festival-kicks-off-with-abdullah-and-patriot>.

²⁴⁰ Shaharyar Khalid. "Pakistan Theatre Festival Kicks off in Karachi." *Geo TV*, September 8, 2023, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/509007-pakistan-theatre-festival-kicks-off-at-arts-council-in-karachi>.

On August 16, 2022, The Arts Council of Pakistan organized a Media Evening to stage Maqsood's and Dawar Mehmood's play *Saadhay 14 August*. Maqsood along with President Muhammad Ahmad Shah, and others were present at the event. Ahmad Shah noted that Maqsood and Talat Hussain were initiators of the theater. Mehmood admired actors for their performances as Quaid-e-Azam and Gandhi (Fig 5.78). The play is part of a series by Maqsood introducing prominent figures of Pakistan.



Fig 5. 78: Actors Khizr Ansari (left) plays the Chief Minister of an Indian state, Bihar, and Omar Kazi plays Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in *Saadhay 14 August* in Karachi, Pakistan, on August 16, 2022

Source: *Arabnews.pk*, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2144801/pakistan>, Accessed March 10, 2024.

Maqsood enlightened that the play discovers the question of who was responsible for the partition of India, Jinnah or Gandhi. The play directs them to Lahore, Delhi, Kashmir, and London to find answers. Shah additionally said, “The theater was revitalized thanks to Maqsood and Hussain. After Moin Akhtar's death, Maqsood stopped writing until Dawar encouraged him to resume”²⁴¹

The play also features performances by actors like Sajid Hassan, Nazr Hussain, and others. The music is composed by Abbas Ali Khan and Shiraz Upal and sung by Neha Chaudhry. It was well-received, as was the choreography by Raja Mughal. Overall, the event highlighted the play's significance and the contributions of the actors and production team. Maqsood mentioned in an interview to Arab News, “I didn’t write 14 August because Independence Day never came for me

²⁴¹ Peerzada Salman. “Anwar Maqsood’s Independence Day Special *Saadhay 14 August* Is a Good Recipe for a Variety Show.” *Dawn*, August 18, 2022, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1190689>.

after August 14, 1947. People do not really understand what independence truly means and I have tried to convey it in the play (Fig 5.79).”²⁴²



Fig 5. 79: Anwar Maqsood, addresses the audience at the Karachi Arts Council, Karachi on August 16, 2022

Source: *Arabnews.pk*,

<https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2144801/pakistan>, Accessed March 10, 2024.

Musician Ali Hamza mentioned;

“Such historical plays were needed in Pakistan and Maqsood was well placed to write on partition since he had witnessed it closely. He uses humor but what he feels in his heart is also reflected in the play, this was so engaging and so on-point.”²⁴³

The second and final Mushaira of the 15th Aalmi Urdu Conference was held on December 3rd, 2022, at the Arts Council of Karachi. Maqsood was also a speaker at the conference to address and discuss the various current issues. During the conference, Maqsood's session, titled *Ikkisween Sadi ka Pakistan*, was a highpoint along with his sharp and witty analysis of the country while discussing socio-political issues with humor.²⁴⁴ This session marked the close of the 15th Aalmi Urdu Conference (Fig 5.80).

²⁴² Peerzada Salman. “Anwar Maqsood’s Independence Day Special Saadhay 14 August Is a Good Recipe for a Variety Show.” *Dawn*, August 18, 2022, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1190689>.

²⁴³ Correspondent. “Play Saadhay 14 August Staged.” *The News*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1045974-play-saadhay-14-august-staged>.

²⁴⁴ Translation: *Ikkisween Sadi ka Pakistan* (21st Century Pakistan).

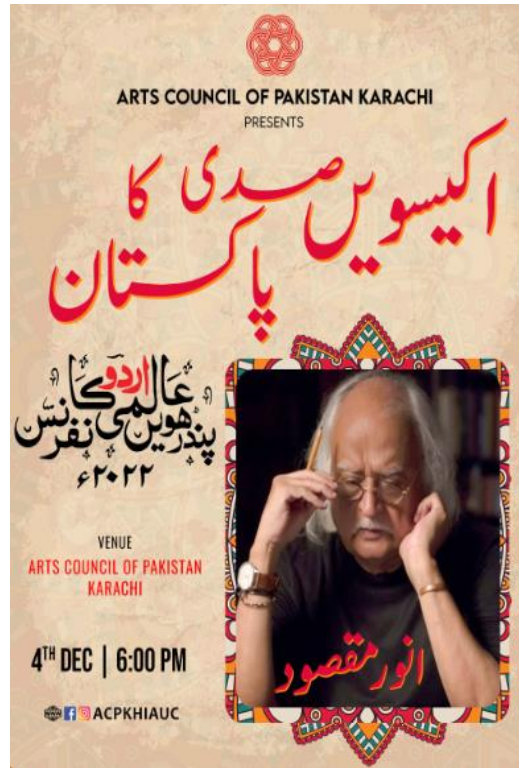


Fig 5. 80: Anwar Maqsood or 21 Sadi ka Pakistan
Source: Acpkhi.com

<https://acpkhi.com/auc/>, Accessed March 11, 2024.

At the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, during 75th Independence Day celebration 2022, Maqsood amused the audience with his words of wit and insight. He won over the crowd with his statement, *Pani sar se na guzar jae*, during the celebration ceremony (Fig 5.81). He sarcastically shed light on the load shedding of Karachi. He also used poetry from various poets to describe the situation. He shared his childhood memories from 1949 when Pakistan became a newly independent state. Additionally, he discussed the socio-political circumstances of Pakistan with comedy, precisely pointing at the Sindh government. He concluded by wishing the best for Pakistan and reminding the public of their power to bring change. His final statement was, "People living in Sindh had no water to drink in past, but recently there is water everywhere. I pray Pani sar se na guzar jae. Pakistan Zindabad."²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi. "Anwar Maqsood's 75 Years of Pakistan." Posted August 14, 2022, YouTube, 14:16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9PdMMRfzRI>.

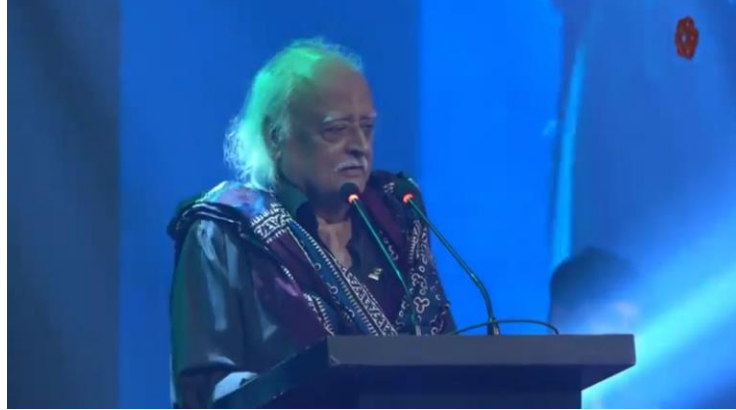


Fig 5. 81: Anwar Maqsood won the hearts of audience with his moving words during the celebration of Pakistan's Diamond Jubilee, marking 75 years of Independence at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi
Source: *Instagram.com*, <https://www.instagram.com/p/ChQWVphNn0q/?igsh=MXh3Y3FrMnVweGg5aQ%3D%3D>, Accessed March 11, 2024.

The Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi held a press conference and inauguration ceremony for the "Arts Council's District Central Chapter" on December 11, 2022. Maqsood was the presider at the event (Fig 5.82).

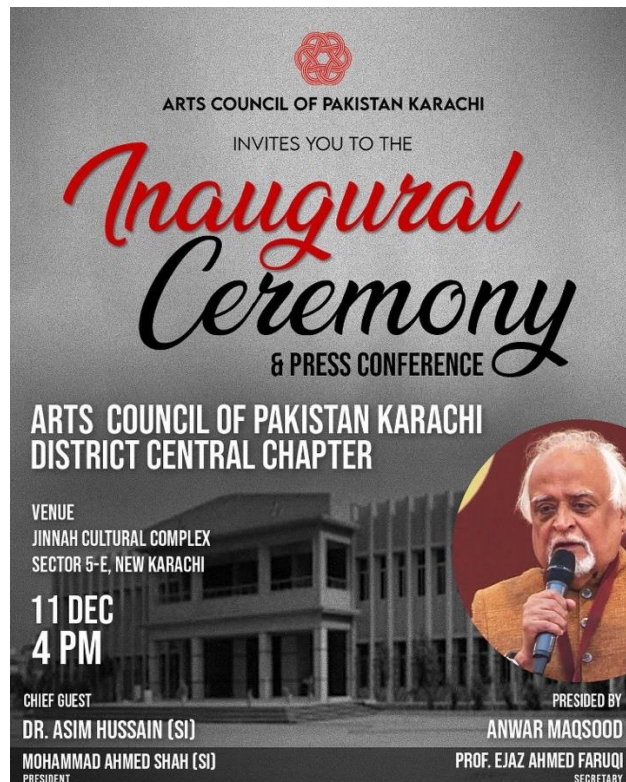


Fig 5. 82: Press Conference & Inauguration Ceremony of the Arts Council's District Central Chapter by Anwar Maqsood. Source: *Instagram.com*, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cl6p8ZfInwQ/?igsh=MTRwNGI4YTRlams2Yg%3D%3D>, Accessed March 12, 2024.

Maqsood gave a speech that had everyone laughing at the Pakistan Literature Festival, on February 10, 2023 (Fig 5.83). He began by fondly remembering his late friend Amjad and then

shifted to express solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Turkey, emphasizing that Pakistan stands with them. Though, he did not step back from addressing the poverty issue in Pakistan and pointed at the government for not doing enough for the public. In his usual style, he humorously and sarcastically mentioned the army and Punjab police, making sharp yet funny observations that resonated with the audience.²⁴⁶

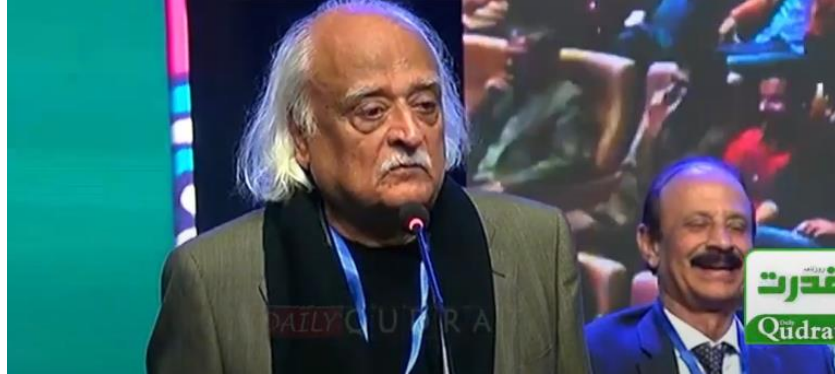


Fig 5. 83: Anwar Maqsood Historical Speech on Pakistan Literature Festival 2023
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN6UIOFcGY0>, Accessed March 12, 2024.

On November 30, 2023, at the opening ceremony of the 16th Aalmi Urdu Conference 2023, Gulzar and Maqsood had an insightful scholarly session and discussion with Hashim Nadeem about various dramas (Fig 5.84).²⁴⁷

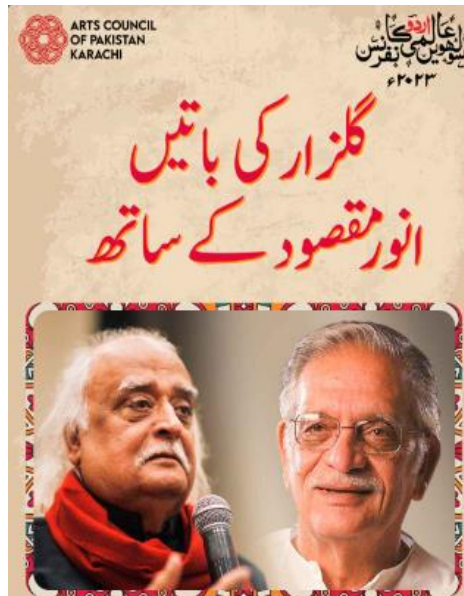


Fig 5. 84: Gulzar and Maqsood
Source: *Acpkhi.com*, <https://acpkhi.com/auc/16th/#>, Accessed March 12, 2024.

²⁴⁶ Qudrat News. "Pakistan Literature Festival 2023, Anwar Maqsood Historical Speech." *YouTube*, February 10, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN6UIOFcGY0>.

²⁴⁷ "Aalmi Urdu Conference." *Acpkhi*. <https://acpkhi.com/auc/16th/#>.

In 2023, The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture hosted a fundraiser for Society of Children in Need of Special Attention. SCINOSA ambassador began the event by presenting a documentary about the impactful work of school. The Dean and Executive Director of IVS, warmly greeted the spectators. Maqsood then took the stage, savoring everyone with his signature wit and humor. Later the event concluded with a heartfelt speech by Samina Alvi (Fig 5.85).²⁴⁸



Fig 5. 85: IVS Hosts Annual SCINOSA Fundraiser

Source: *Indusvalley.edu.pk*, <https://www.indusvalley.edu.pk/news/ivs-hosts-annual-scinosa-fundraiser>, Accessed March 13, 2024.

The Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, presented the Pakistan Theatre Festival. It was a month-long festival that fetched a dynamic of seven international and 27 prominent national theatre groups on September 7, 2023. The festival introduced 45 shows, workshops, and talks, including a session with Maqsood. At the festival's opening day Maqsood was awarded a shield by Ahmed Shah during the event (Fig 5.86).



Fig 5. 86: The grand opening ceremony of Pakistan Theatre Festival 2023 presented by ACPK

Source: *Instagram.com*, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw8aIraoEr6/?img_index=1, Accessed March 15, 2024.

²⁴⁸ Indus Valley. "IVS Hosts Annual SCINOSA Fundraiser." *Indus Valley*, 2023, <https://www.indusvalley.edu.pk/news/ivs-hosts-annual-scinosa-fundraiser>.

The ACPKHI in collaboration with the Consulate General of Japan, showcased the Japanese Film Festival at ACPKHI on October 19, 2023. Ahmed Shah, Consul General of Japan H. E. Odagiri Toshio, and Maqsood were all present at the opening of the festival (Fig 5.87). The films 'Dad's Lunch Box' and 'Being Good' were showed during the two-day event. While speaking at the festival Maqsood said, “Considering the condition of Pakistan today, a festival like this is a breath of fresh air.”²⁴⁹



Fig 5. 87: The Consulate-General of Japan in Karachi showcased the Japanese Film Festival 2023 at ACPKHI
Source: *Instagram.com*, https://www.instagram.com/p/CyliqyTtPoG/?img_index=1, Accessed March 15, 2024.

Maqsood and Moin Akhtar shared a deeply cherished bond and collaborated on numerous TV shows, including popular ones like *Loose Talk*, *Fifty-Fifty*, *Aangan Tehra*, *Half Plate*, and several others. Moin Akhtar's death left Maqsood in deep grief, and he misses him greatly, especially on his every death anniversary. On April 16, 2024 Maqsood honored Akhtar, in a special theatrical presentation at the SCRF Expo Centre Sharjah. Their collaboration, which spanned over four decades, had greatly influenced Pakistan's entertainment (Fig 5.88). On May 7, 2024, Maqsood paid a tribute to Akhtar through live performances and storytelling at Bazm-e-Urdu Dubai and Sharjah Children Reading Festival by presenting entertaining Urdu performances. Yasir Hussain, revived Maqsood's famous sketches from "Loose Talk," transporting the audience back to an era when Maqsood and Akhtar's partnership symbolized unparalleled success. These sketches evoked memories of a time when the duo was synonymous with laughter and success.

The occasion allowed spectators to recall the life and career of Akhtar with Maqsood, the performed scripts written for Akhtar and reviving cherished memories. Rehan Khan, founder of Bazm-e-Urdu, guaranteed the audience for an unforgettable evening filled with laughter and nostalgia, celebrating the bond and talent of Akhtar and Maqsood. "Tribute to Moin Akhtar" was

²⁴⁹ Acpkhiofficial. "The Opening of the Japanese Film Festival 2023 Organized by Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi." *Instagram*, October 21, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CyqBI2Qocly/?igsh=anVra3ZnZ3Rkenl5>.

a touching reminder of the valuable lesson that entertainment can offer through humor and heartfelt performances.²⁵⁰



Fig 5. 88: Anwar Maqsood's Tribute to Moin Akhtar: A Night of Laughter and Nostalgia at SCRF24
Source: *Instagram.com*, https://www.instagram.com/thebrewnews/p/C6nJrA4Ihxb/?img_index=1,
Accessed March 15, 2024.

On May 15, 2024, Maqsood was invited as a speaker for the segment *Anwar Maqsood ki Baatein* and shared the stage with Adnan Siddique at the Pakistan Literature Festival Quetta.²⁵¹ Siddique asked Maqsood why he hasn't written for television in a long time. He replied, "I write comedy, and now comedy is being shown in the provincial and national assemblies of Pakistan, so after seeing that, I can't write for television. So, I have taken a break."²⁵²

The show refreshed memories of Maqsood's past shows, including *Aangan Terha*, *Ba Adab*, *Ba Mulahizah*, *Alif Noon*, *Fifty Fifty*, among several others. Siddique questioned about the decline of socio-political comedy shows in Pakistan, to which Maqsood replied, "That time will come, and a new time will come when people will value literature and writing."²⁵³ Siddique also asked, "I have always seen you wearing black, why is that?" Maqsood responded, "I have been observing *Yoom-e-Siyah* since 14 August 1947."²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Staff Report. "Anwar Maqsood Brings to Life Unmatched Talent of Iconic Moin Akhtar in Heart-Warming Tribute." *Pakistan Today*, April 16, 2024. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/04/16/anwar-maqsood-brings-to-life-unmatched-talent-of-iconic-moin-akhtar-in-heart-warming-tribute/>.

²⁵¹ Translation: Anwar Maqsood ki Baatein (The Words/Talk of Anwar Maqsood).

²⁵² PLF. "Anwar Maqsood Ki Baatein with Adnan Siddique at Pakistan Literature Festival." *Facebook*, May 20, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/acpkhiplf/>.

²⁵³ Agay Ki Khabar. "Anwar Maqsood Ki Baatein at Pakistan Literature Festival Quetta." *YouTube*, May 15, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_nEZSG9tDI.

²⁵⁴ Agay Ki Khabar. "Anwar Maqsood Ki Baatein at Pakistan Literature Festival Quetta." *YouTube*, May 15, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_nEZSG9tDI.

Maqsood inspired the public of Balochistan to do something for Pakistan and use facilities like social media and the internet in order to bring development in the country (Fig 5.89). The conversation enclosed topics like cricket, poetry, his early life, employment, role of Army, television, remembering Moin Akhtar and was full of wit, humor, and comedic lines on each topic.

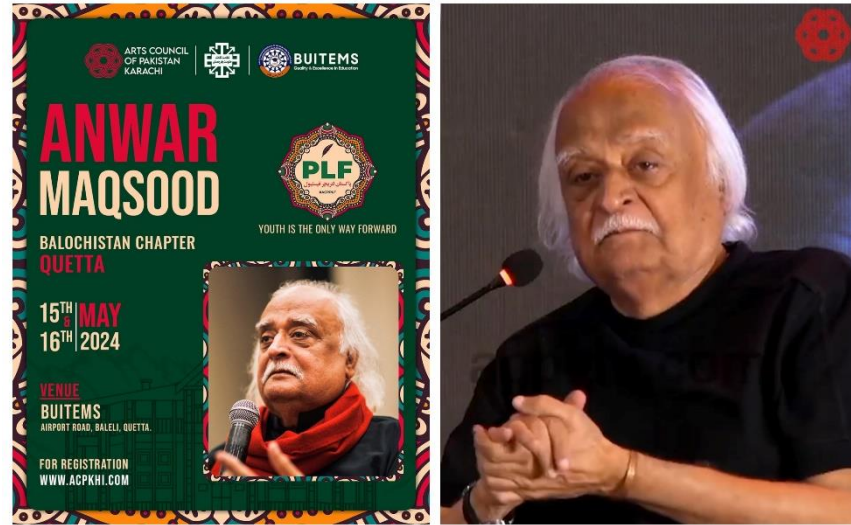


Fig 5. 89: Anwar Maqsood ki Baatein at Pakistan Literature Festival Quetta
Source: *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_nEZSG9tDI, Accessed March 18, 2024.

The Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi celebrated the excellence and dedication of Sultana Siddiqui, honoring her 50 years in showbiz and social activism on June 30th, 2024. At the event, Maqsood was one of the speakers among Mahira Khan, Adnan Siddique and Sanam Saeed, who spoke highly about her contributions (Fig 5.90).



Fig 5. 90: Highlights from Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi's Tribute to Sultana Siddiqui
Source: *Instagram.com*, https://www.instagram.com/p/C82i2FjoPcu/?igsh=MTd1bDU2OGZydW9neQ%3D%3D&img_index=7, Accessed March 18, 2024.

5.4 As an Interviewee

Maqsood has been invited in various interviews by journalists and platforms to share his visions on social, personal life and political matters in Pakistan.

In the 1980s, Maqsood and his wife were interviewed by Moin Akhtar in a rapid-fire round format at LG TV show on PTV (Fig 5.91). During the show, Akhtar asked a sequence of rapid questions from both of them. Maqsood responded to each question with his distinctive wit and humorous one-liners, showcasing his sharp thinking and humor.



Fig 5. 91: Mr & Mrs. Anwar Maqsood-interview-Moin Akhtar show-PTV
Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ozs9l>, Accessed April 2, 2024.

On February 22nd, 2015, Maqsood appeared on show *Naeem Bokhari Ke Saath*.²⁵⁵ During the interview, they had a conversation about media, politics, and the diverse career of Maqsood. They touched upon his participation in shows like *Zia Mohyeddin Show*, *Half Plate*, *Fifty Fifty*," among others (Fig 5.92).



Fig 5. 92: Anwar Maqsood Special Interview Naeem Bokhari Ke Saath 22nd Feb 2015
Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2hvdul>, Accessed April 2, 2024.

²⁵⁵ Translation: Naeem Bokhari Ke Saath (With Naeem Bokhari).

Maqsood has a deep interest in poetry and often quotes verses from various poets during live social media sessions, interviews, podcasts on various platforms. In 2018, he was interviewed along with Vaneeza Ahmad on Hum TV's show, "The After Moon Show with Yasir" Season 2 (Fig 5.93). During the interview, he shared his fond memories of Akhtar, highlighting how passionate Moin was about the excellent scripts Maqsood wrote, always keen to deliver the best lines himself. Additionally, he spoke about his love for sports specially cricket. He humorously said that if he weren't from Karachi, he might have played in test matches. The interview was filled with Maqsood's symbolic puns and sarcasm.



Fig 5. 93: Chit Chat with Vaneeza Ahmad & Anwar Maqsood on The After Moon Show with Yasir S02 HUM TV
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hih00le4vy8>, Accessed April 2, 2024.

Maqsood was invited to a TV segment on ARY News in 2018, where he applauded Imran Khan for his efforts towards ensuring the progress of the country. He spoke about the importance of building dams and discussed the overall condition of Pakistan. Maqsood advised viewers to support Khan in his mission to make the country better (Fig 5.94).



Fig 5. 94: Anwar Maqsood lauds Imran Khan for his efforts
Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6t9i0f>, Accessed April 2, 2024.

In a poem recited by him on August 30, 2020, he resonates Karachi's issue of heavy rains which has made life miserable for the residents of Karachi. In the video, Anwar recited a poem by renowned Urdu literary figure Zehra Nigah. The poem describes how even wild animals in the jungle also have a system to look after each other during calamities. It vividly portrays lions stopping their hunt when they've had enough and birds looking after each other's nests when their eggs are at risk. Through these equivalences, the poem highlights how Karachiites lack even the basic law of the jungle, where chaos seems to reign, but there's still a system that allows life to continue (Fig 5.95).²⁵⁶



Fig 5. 95: Even jungles have rules, A poem recited by Anwar Maqsood on Karachi's current situation
Source: *Geo.tv*, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/305162>, Accessed April 2, 2024.

On May 16, 2020 Maqsood joined his son for a live session on Instagram where he answered to ten of the most asked questions about him (Fig 5.96). Maqsood talked about his work, his late friend Akhtar, and gave valuable advice to the youth. When asked if he misses his co-star from the iconic show *Loose Talk*, Maqsood became emotional and said,

“Memories never leave your heart. Like a vine, it wraps itself around a tree. Moin is like that vine wrapped around my heart.” He added, “32 years I wrote for Moin. They are in everyone's hearts and homes. Often, when I write a program like *Loose Talk*, I find myself writing Moin's name after mine and then have to cross it out. Big people [like him] they might leave [our] sight but are here...Moin is here. He's in every house, he's in every heart.”²⁵⁷

When questioned to select between painting and writing, he said, “Painting and writing chose me.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Web Desk. “Even Jungles Have Rules, a Poem Recited by Anwar Maqsood on Karachi's Current Situation.” *Geo Tv*, August 30, 2020, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/305162>.

²⁵⁷ Sheherbano Syed. “Moin Akhtar Is in Every House, He Is in Every Heart: Anwar Maqsood.” *Daily Pakistan Global*, May 16, 2020, <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/16-May-2020/moin-akhtar>.

²⁵⁸ Web Desk. “People like Moin Akhtar Tend to Live on Even after Their Death: Anwar Maqsood.” *ARY News*, May 16, 2020, <https://arynews.tv/anwar-maqsood-reminisces-memories-moin-akhtar/>.



Fig 5. 96: Anwar Maqsood recalled writing for late comedian Moin Akhtar in a Q&A session
Source: Arynews.tv, <https://arynews.tv/anwar-maqsood-reminisces-memories-moin-akhtar/>, Accessed April 3, 2024.

Maqsood has given countless interviews on several private news channels in Pakistan. He has confidently discussed the socio-political scenario of Pakistan in his own witty style. He has also been interviewed several times about upcoming and past projects. On, October 8, 2021, he gave an interview to a local news channel, where he shed light on his experiences on working in shows like *Aangan Terha* and *Fifty Fifty* during General Zia Ul Haq's era. He also stated his disappointment with the past and current state of Pakistan's comedy. He added;

"I would often be disappointed in television. It was government-owned. One time, I had a sentence in *Aangan Terha* where Chaudhry Sahab says to Akbar, 'Whoever knows how to speak English in Pakistan, he will never die hungry because he'll get a job somewhere or the other.' Akbar replies saying he knows English, following which Chaudhry Sahab asks him to translate, '*Kya mein ja raha hun,*' to which he responds, 'Army going.' Chaudhry Sahab then says, 'Not a chance. You live in a country like this. You'll get me killed. There can't be any English more wrong than this.' That ended up going on air. It was Zia Sahab's time."²⁵⁹

According to Maqsood, freedom of media does not line up well with a Pakistan's society, where a significant percentage of the population lacks education. Expanding on his thoughts about media freedom and television ratings, Maqsood stated;

"A lot of prominent journalists were upset with me when I said during a press conference with Pervez Musharraf Sahab, 'You've given media freedom, but you should have done this once the country had a higher level of education. 70-80% of our population is uneducated. For them, media freedom is equivalent to destruction.' There are so many stories on TV now that uneducated people watch and then want to emulate. They are just plays, treat them as such. There are so many shows that even I can't watch. Ratings have spoiled media freedom. The more shamelessness, meaningless dialogue, and disrespect, the higher the rating."²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Entertainment Desk. "The More Disrespect, the Higher the Ratings: Anwar Maqsood." *The Express Tribune*, October 8, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2323851/1>.

²⁶⁰ "Celebrated Veteran Scriptwriter Anwar Maqsood Recently Sat Down for an Interview with a Local News Outlet." *Facebook Express Tribune Life & Style*, October 8, 2021, <https://ms-my.facebook.com/ETLifeandStyle/photos/a.324763874277536/4444637708956778/?type=3>.

On July 21, 2021, Maqsood and his son Bilal was interviewed on "11th Hour," a show at ARY News channel, The segment was titled *Anwar Maqsood Aur Bilal Maqsood Sai Masoomana Sawalat*.²⁶¹ The show host Waseem Badami asked questions about Bilal's band, for which Maqsood used to write songs. Maqsood also shared his views on his mimicry done by actors on various other socio-political programs (Fig 5.97).



Fig 5. 97: Anwar Maqsood Aur Bilal Maqsood Sai Masoomana Sawalat
Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x82ujoz>, Accessed April 4, 2024.

On September 16, 2021, Maqsood gave an interview on Channel Brandsynario where he discussed about the Pakistani drama industry, politics, comedy, and his writings (Fig 5.98). He praised Pakistani women for working harder than men in every area. While mentioning the positive role of women in Pakistani society he appreciated them for opting for higher education and careers. Whereas, for the past 15 years, Pakistani young men have only gotten free bikes and laptops from the government. As a substitute of getting higher education, they are seen on streets protesting and wasting time. During the interview, Maqsood asked himself,

“Why a satirist like him has survived for the past 80 years, and majority writings are for the people of Pakistan but never for the government. If I had written for the government, my outcome would have been different. I have always written for common man who watch television at home and cannot afford to go to the cinema, and that my script characters have always been set in Pakistan, never abroad.”²⁶²

²⁶¹ Translation: Anwar Maqsood Aur Bilal Maqsood Sai Masoomana Sawalat (Innocent questions with Anwar Maqsood Aur Bilal Maqsood).

²⁶² Brandsynario, “Anwer Maqsood Interview,” Posted September 15, 2021, YouTube, 5:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op3MGCPFcI>.

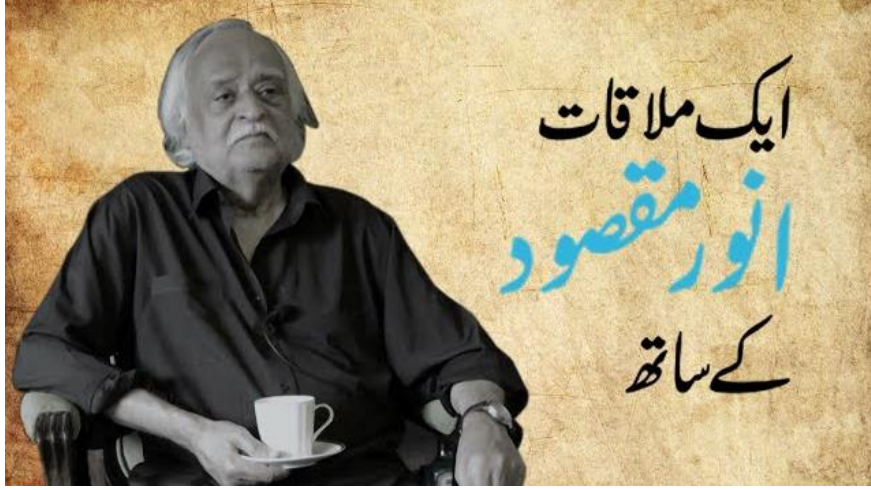


Fig 5. 98: Anwer Maqsood Interview

Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op3MGCPFxcl>, Accessed April 5, 2024.

Maqsood also recalled about Nasar Ali Khan, for whom he used to illustrate columns that were later published. He stressed that storytelling should be done without the interruption of cell phones and by criticizing the current trend in dramas where cell phones are universal. He concluded that dramas only work if the story script is good enough.

Maqsood gave an interview to Independent Urdu, On May 6, 2022, he fondly reminisced about celebrating Eid with his family (Fig 5.99). He recalled how even a small amount of money brought immense joy back then, when comparing it with the current devaluation of the Pakistani rupee. Maqsood was asked about his method of writing the imaginary letters from historical figures. If they have been alive to see today's Pakistan then what would be their thoughts? He answered with his wit, saying, "They must be thanking Allah that they are not here to see today's Pakistan."²⁶³ He spoken about his fear about the regression of the country, noticing how the rest of the world has made development over the years whereas Pakistan appears to be moving backwards. He also recalled about his episodes with Akhtar, remembering how their work resonated deeply with audiences of both Pakistan and India.

²⁶³ Independent Urdu, "Anwar Maqsood: Letters from Ghalib, Iqbal, and John Still Come to Me," Facebook, May 6, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/IndyUrdu/videos>.



Fig 5. 99: Anwar Maqsood: Letters from Ghalib, Iqbal, and John still come to me.
Source: *Facebook.com*, <https://www.facebook.com/IndyUrdu/videos>, Accessed April 5, 2024.

Maqsood, abruptly left the show "Fifty Fifty" for a while due to an incident. He also discussed his departure on ARY News show "Eleventh Hour" on June 30, 2023 (Fig 5.100). He shared that he had written 16 episodes for the show after being approached by its creator, Shoaib Maqsood and it was launched from the state channel's Karachi center. Maqsood narrated that prior military dictator Zia-ul-Haq invited the entire team of "Fifty Fifty" for a meeting without him. Maqsood was told that the show's admiration was because of the performers, not the writing, in response to that Maqsood sarcastically said, "This was news to him and decided to leave the show since it could apparently succeed without him."²⁶⁴ Moreover, he said he observed a lack of appreciation for the show's success and had a feeling of disrespect by younger actors on set, stating;

"When the program became a hit, and I shouldn't say this, the children on the team who were fresh off the stage would suddenly become adults as soon as I'd Walk into the room with the script. They all became hits. They'd have their shirt buttons open, would whip out a cigarette from the pack in their pockets and I'd ask me, 'What have you got for us?'"²⁶⁵

After leaving, Maqsood launched the show "Shosha," featuring actors known for serious roles, such as Talat Hussan, Shafi Muhammad Shah, Shakeel Yousuf, Subhani Ba Yunus, Javed Sheikh, Mehmood Ali, and Qazi Wajid.

²⁶⁴ Web Desk, "The Incident Which Made Anwar Maqsood Quit Fifty Fifty," *ARY News*, June 30, 2023, <https://arynews.tv/heres-why-anwar-maqsood-quit-fifty-fifty/#:~:text=He%20recalled%20former%20military%20dictator>.

²⁶⁵ Entertainment Desk, "The More Disrespect, the Higher the Ratings: Anwar Maqsood," *The Express Tribune*, October 8, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2323851/1>.



Fig 5. 100: The incident which made Anwar Maqsood quit Fifty Fifty

Source: Facebook.com, <https://www.facebook.com/arynewsasia/videos/571940418444732/>, Accessed April 8, 2024.

On June 2, 2023, Digitales Season 3 host Faizan interviewed Maqsood and discussed his iconic masterpieces like *Loose Talk*, *Aangan Terha*, *Fifty Fifty*, and many other social and political sitcom gems (Fig 5.101). The conversation in the podcast was about the origins of creative script writing of Maqsood, the story behind the creation of *Loose Talk*, insights into his political associations, the outlook for satire in Pakistan, and countless other topics.

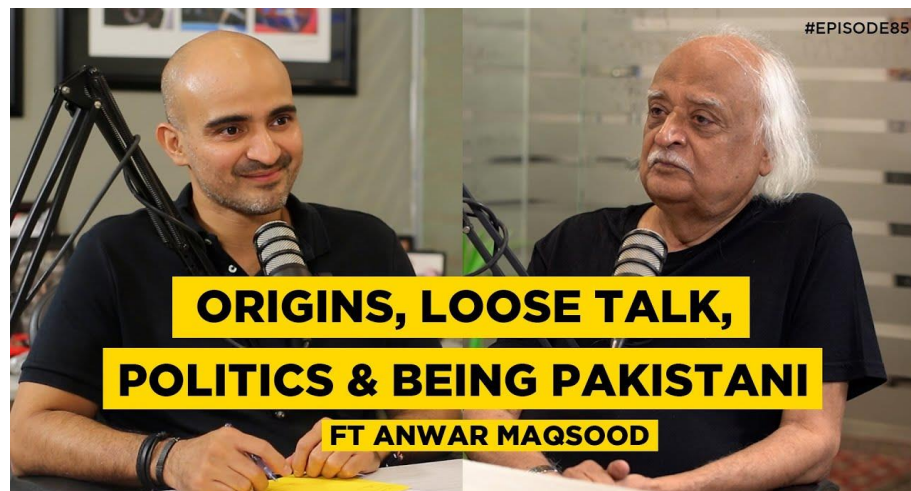


Fig 5. 101: Anwar Maqsood Origins, Loose Talk, Politics and Being Pakistani Digitales Epi 85

Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCRvcvec5qU>, Accessed April 8, 2024.

Aap Ki Baat titled Podcast was premiered on September 30, 2023, featuring an interaction with Maqsood where he spoke about the blessings of Pakistan and also shared stories of the partition and post-partition time (Fig 5.102).²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Translation: *Aap Ki Baat* (Your Talk).



Fig 5. 102: The Secrets Anwar Maqsood Reveals in this Podcast
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmPgyMGyrEk>, Accessed April 8, 2024.

On January 17, 2024, a special episode of "Untold Truths with Anwar Maqsood" was premiered on Raftar TV Podcast, where he discussed about his career and life (Fig 5.103). Topics include his friendship with Jaun Elia and Moin Akhtar, his impactful speeches, and memorable life events. During the interview the influence of Quaid-e-Azam on Pakistan was discussed, and it also critically examines the democratic landscape of the country. Cultural influences shaping the identity of Pakistan were explored, along with Maqsood's talent in both comedy and poetry. Additionally, his memorable career in the Loose Talk Show is highlighted with showcasing his unique blend of humor and wisdom.²⁶⁷



Fig 5. 103: Untold Truths with Anwar Maqsood, People of Pakistan & Did Quaid-e-Azam make a mistake?
Source: Youtube.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JNQ_-6uV44, Accessed April 7, 2024.

²⁶⁷ Raftar, "Untold Truths with Anwar Maqsood, People of Pakistan & Did Quaid-e-Azam Make a Mistake," YouTube (Raftar TV, January 17, 2024). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JNQ_-6uV44.

On June 7, 2024, during the T20 World Cup, Maqsood displayed his humor while discussing the unexpected loss of Pakistan's team to the USA team. He humorously credited the defeat to Pakistan due to not having the IMF loan and US might have given a condition for the loan approval. He quipped.

"The IMF must have put a condition on Pakistan to lose against America in the match to receive a new package and I couldn't think of any other reason for the loss. Those who had bought tickets for the upcoming Pakistan and India match would now be selling them at half the price."²⁶⁸

In conclusion, this chapter examines the contributions of Maqsood considering the socio-political comedy genre through paintings, exhibitions, hosting seminars, festivals, and contribution in shows and events. Maqsood has consistently addressed socio-political topics with his unique, witty style. For the past several years, he has bravely and confidently tackled sensitive issues with satire, influencing many with his remarkable approach. Maqsood's contributions became a foundation for upcoming shows, plays, and conferences, with many following his detailed style of dialogue delivery and keen observations on social and political issues, all infused with a sharp touch of humor.

²⁶⁸ News Desk, "Anwar Maqsood Says Pakistan's Defeat against USA Must Be an IMF Condition'," *The Express Tribune*, June 7, 2024, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2470309/anwar-maqsood-says-pakistans-defeat-against-usa-must-be-an-imf-condition>.

CHAPTER 6

THE IMPACT OF ANWAR MAQSOOD ON COMEDY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL SATIRE OF PAKISTAN

In Chapter 3, titled *Overview of Comedy in Pakistan*, the development of comedy in Pakistan was discussed, concluding that socio-political comedy gained prominence after the partition. Maqsood's contributions are particularly noteworthy within this genre. However, Chapter 4, *Exploring Maqsood's Broader Socio-Political Contributions*, delves deeper into Maqsood's work beyond traditional comedy. This includes his further works related to socio-political comedy encompassing of his contributions including paintings, exhibitions, live shows, seminars, festivals and his roles as a host and a guest. Whereas, this chapter will investigate into the theater productions, stage plays and TV programs which are based on the socio-political comedy other than Maqsood's work since 1947.

Despite continuing turmoil and government bans, socio-political satire shows became platforms for delivering messages to the public. The theatre of Pakistan has been remarkably political particularly during certain periods and was used to influence the political climate of the country. The Indian Peoples Theatre Association was a main group that was established before the partition in the late 1930s. IPTA theatrical plays were based on opposed British rule and criticized the silence of local people. IPTA was dissolved in 1947 when most of its members, primarily Hindu Communists moved to India. Moreover, in 1950 Pakistan Communalist Party was banned and its leaders were arrested. In the meanwhile, Karachi established itself as a center for creative activities, chiefly in theatre (Fig 6.1).²⁶⁹ In the 1950s, Khawja Mohayyudin produced his first play, *Lal Qilay Se Lalu Khet Tak*, to highlight the dilemma of the migrants.²⁷⁰ In the play, comedy arises from the miserable condition of immigrants who leave their well-settled lives in Delhi, undertake a deadly journey and arrive in Karachi only to find themselves homeless and living in thatched shacks.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Wajiha Tareen, "Encompassing Pakistani Theatre (Part 2) by Wajiha Tareen," *AE Magazine*, April 28, 2022, <https://aemagazine.pk/article/encompassing-pakistani-theatre-part-2>.

²⁷⁰ Translation: Lal Qile se Lalukhet Tak (From the Red Fort to Lalukhet).

²⁷¹ "South Asian Arts - Pakistan, Music, Dance," in *Britannica*, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/art/South-Asian-arts/Pakistan#ref532823>.



Fig 6. 1: Zia Mohyeddin (on the floor, left) with father Khadim Mohyeddin (seated second from right), playwright and theatre director. Source: *Youlinmagazine.com*, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/70-years-of-theatre-a-flashback-through-the-ages/OTI0>, Accessed April 17, 2024.

Mujrim Kon, a theatre play directed by Naeem Tahir and interpreted by Izhar Kazmi in 1956, marked one of the first professional theatre productions in Pakistan.²⁷² The play ran for 14 successive nights and lasted 90 minutes per act. It was also staged in Karachi under the supervision of Khwaja Moin Ud Din. The story of the play was focused on socio-political issues and narrates the story of a poor girl, criticizing the conditions of society during the Ayub's regime.²⁷³

Aap Ki Tareef, created by Naeem and Yasmin Tahir in 1956, an Urdu adaptation of Philip King's "See How They Run" served as a nostalgic reminder of a period when efforts to resuscitate and promote theatre in Pakistan were in full swing (Fig 6.2). Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, the secretary of the Pakistan Arts Council, energized the theatre scene and directed multiple plays at the council. This period saw a gathering of passionate actors around him, including figures like Izhar Kazmi from Radio Pakistan, Shoaib Hashmi, Salima Hashmi, and Sikandar Shaheen. The play also encouraged the international movement known as the Theatre of the Absurd. In *Aap Ki Tareef*, performers act in ways that create absurd situations, highlighting the inherent absurdity of life, boosted the popularity of comedy at Alhamra, leading those involved in the drama circle to realize that this style of theatre could resonate with audiences in Pakistan.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Translation: *Mujrim Kon* (Who is the Criminal).

²⁷³ Adil Aziz, Dr. Shazia Ismail Toor, and Niza Qureshi, "Cultural Resilience through Theater: An In-Depth Examination of Dramatic Narrative Communication in the Post-Partition Era," *Pakistan Journal of Social Research* 4, no. 2 (April 2022): 1320–27. <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v4i2.1333>.

²⁷⁴ Intizar Husain, review of *Sangat Book Review of Aap Ki Tareef*, by Naeem and Yasmin Tahir, *Sangatreview.org*, Dawn, September 20, 2015, <https://www.sangatreview.org/blog/2016/11/17/aap-ki-tareef>.

In spite of its comedic nature, *Aap Ki Tareef* gave a deeper meaning, explored the idea that, while humans are rational beings, even the slightest situation can strip them of common sense, exposing their inherent foolishness.



Fig 6. 2: Aap Ki Tareef by Naeem and Yasmin Tahir
Source: Dawn.com, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1207789>, Accessed April 17, 2024.

Another play by Tahir includes, *Adaab Arz*, an Urdu adaptation of "She Stoops to Conquer" by Oliver Goldsmith's.²⁷⁵ The play was staged in 1959 and was a sitcom. It was co-translated and directed by Naeem who also played the central role and was accompanied by Yasmin. They followed this with another comedy, *Soay Kahan*, which was an adaptation of "Little Bit of Fluff." Naeem and Yasmin played lead roles, with Khursheed Shahid in a supporting character.²⁷⁶

Prior to this, plays like *Jum Jum Jewe Jmman Pura*, which later became *Junjal Pura* on PTV, tackled the issue of overpopulation.²⁷⁷ Other prominent plays, such as *Barri* and *Nele Hath*, addressed women's issues, including their experiences in jail and domestic violence.²⁷⁸ Theatre also played a crucial role in promoting education in Balochistan, starting around 1960. *Waqat ki Talash*, produced by Jamal Shah and written and directed by Mr. Murrad, portrayed the oppression

²⁷⁵ Translations: *Adaab Arz* (Respectful Greetings) and *Soay Kahan* (Where Did You Sleep?).

²⁷⁶ Intizar Husain, "The Absurdity of Life," *Dawn*, September 20, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1207789>.

²⁷⁷ Translations: *Jum Jum Jewe Jmman Pura* (May Jumman Pura Live Long), *Junjal Pura* (Land of Chaos).

²⁷⁸ Translations: *Barri* (The Acquittal) and *Nele Hath* (Dark Hands).

during the Zia regime and highlighted terrorism in Balochistan.²⁷⁹ This play was another significant piece in the socio-political theatre history of Pakistan.²⁸⁰

During the regime of Ayub Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto sponsored theatre in 1963. Thus, the Pakistan Council for National Integration was formed to promote unity nationwide and produced its first play, *Rishta*, in 1965. The play highlights the spirit of brotherhood between Pakistan's two units. In the early 1970s, Pakistan saw the growth of sketch sitcom. The regime of Yahya Khan saw the emergence of politically driven theatre practitioners like Major Ishaq Muhammad, who produced the Punjabi play *Mussali* in poverty troubled areas of Punjab. In 1971, Sarmad Sehbai produced the Punjabi play *Tum Kaun Mein Kaun* at Government College Lahore, and Shahid Nadeem debuted with *Marya Hoya Khota* in Lahore. Television Shows like *Such Gup* (1973 to 1975) featuring Shoaib and Salima Hashmi was widespread till it was banned during Zia's regime.²⁸¹ Years later Umer Sharif became one of the most famous stage performers of Pakistan, due to his immensely popular comedy plays. In 1976, he wrote *Bionic Servant* which was inspired by the American TV series *Six Million Dollar Man* and this marked as his first collaboration with Akhtar (Fig 6.3).²⁸² On television *Tal Matol* (1979) was a widespread comedy show until it was banned.²⁸³



Fig 6. 3: Bionic servant 1976, was the first commercial stage play by Umer Sharif, played the role of Akhtar's father
Source: Facebook.com, <https://www.facebook.com/OmerSharifOfficial/posts/bionic-servant-1976-ye-mera-first-commercial-stage-play-tha-is-waqt-meri-age-16-/819597358052394/>, Accessed April 20, 2024.

²⁷⁹ Translation: Waqt ki Talash (In Search of Time).

²⁸⁰ Adil Aziz and Farish Yousufzai, "Highlighting Socio-Political Issues through Theatre in Pakistan," *Journal of Media Studies* 37, no. 1 (2022): 1–26. <http://111.68.103.26/journals/index.php/jms/article/viewFile/5264/2486>.

²⁸¹ Translation: Such Gup (Truth and Fib).

²⁸² Bolton, Mark, et al. "Personalizing Politics: Producing Accountability on Pakistan's News Television," *Seabird Journal* (2017). <https://doi.org/10.61350/sbj.30.15>.

²⁸³ Translation: Tal Matol (Quibbling).

Tehreek-e-Niswan was formed in 1979 in Karachi, led by Sheema Kirmani who also worked as a supporter for women's rights (Fig 6.4).²⁸⁴ She led several plays that aided as a platform for protest and gave voice to the burdened and downgraded laborer women who were often uneducated and unaware of their rights. While giving out details to *The Express Tribune* about the play "Passage to India" Kirmani added emphatically,

"The women from both clans refuse to become prisoners of war in the aftermath of an inter-clan battle, hence forcing clan leaders to negotiate a peace settlement amongst themselves. It's a long play hence we are only staging two respective scenes from it. We will also perform classical dances on Faiz's poems like "Aaj Ke Naam", "Shaam" and "Hum Bhi Dekhain Gaay", parallel to birthday celebrations."²⁸⁵



Fig 6. 4: Tehreek-e-Niswan: Passage to India

Source: *Tribune.com.pk*, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/201704/tehrick-e-niswan-passage-to-india>, Accessed April 20, 2024.

In the 1980s, the "Parallel theatre movement" emerged as a thoughtful effort to oppose the regime of Zia and policy changes. This movement goes long back considering the history of the subcontinent in view of socio-political theatre. The martial law government tried to restrain the theatre groups by not granting them access to theatres in Lahore and Karachi. In response, theatre activists used substitute venues, such as private homes of supporters and foreign cultural centers like the Goethe Institute. They invited audiences to these performances and collected voluntary

²⁸⁴ Translation: Tehreek-e-Niswan (Women's Movement).

²⁸⁵ Saadia Qamar, "Tehrik-e-Niswan: Passage to India," *The Express Tribune*, July 3, 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/201704/tehrick-e-niswan-passage-to-india>.

membership fees at the end. This approach made the acts seem like private gatherings, offering some protection from police harassment and avoiding censorship and taxation issues.²⁸⁶

Sheema Kermani presented *Dard Kay Faaslay* in 1981, highlighting the impact of religious extremism and intolerance on women audience in a populated middle-class area.²⁸⁷ Kermani takes pride in the fact that their plays are always socially relevant and has mentioned,

“We integrate dialogue and narrative with dance and music, traditional story telling techniques and conventions borrowed from the subcontinent’s folk traditions of nautanki, tamasha and yatra to create meaningful theatre.”²⁸⁸

Dastak and *Bang* were the most politically active theaters among the groups in Karachi. *Dastak* was formed in 1982 and often teamed up with trade unions and performed at their events (Fig 6.5). In Lahore, prominent groups were Ajoka Theatre that was formed in 1984, Punjab Lok Rehas which was an offshoot of Ajoka Theatre, *Sanjh*, and *Naya* Theatre. Ajoka's performances were characterized by their elaboration on the oral traditions of Bhand and Nautanki, reintroducing a musical element to Pakistani theater. However, Ajoka Theatre plays were mostly focused on socio-political themes, including gender-based violence, religious prejudice, and political domination. These groups performed editions of plays by Marxist playwrights like Brecht and Ariel Dorfman, along with original scripts by Pakistani and Indian collectivists such as Fakhar Zaman, Sarmad Sehbai and Badal Sircar. Their performances challenged political and social norms, addressed issues like dictatorship and social control, and introduced audiences to concepts of class exploitation. The relevance of resistance theatre declined after Zia’s regime ended and Benazir Bhutto was elected in 1988, thus putting an end to state oppression towards political theatre which eventually diminished. *Bang* was established around 1989 as a side shoot of *Dastak*, and focused on street theatre with a strong political agenda.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Hajrah Mumtaz, “Theatre for Change,” *Dawn*, July 26, 2009, <https://www.dawn.com/news/923580/theatre-for-change>.

²⁸⁷ Translation: *Dard Kay Faaslay* (Distances of Pain).

²⁸⁸ Khurshid Hyder, “Theatrics: The Force Is Still Strong with Tehrik,” *Dawn*, March 21, 2009, <https://www.dawn.com/news/451539/theatrics-the-force-is-still-strong-with-tehrik>.

²⁸⁹ Brown History, “Archiving Dastak: How One Theatre Troupe Challenged a Dictator in 1980s Karachi,” *Brown History*, February 2, 2023, <https://brownhistory.substack.com/p/archiving-dastak-how-one-theatre>.



Fig 6. 5: The cast of Dastak's play *Petit Bourgeois*, Theatre Troupe in 1980s Karachi by Hasan ul Haq
Source: *Brownhistory.substack.com*, <https://brownhistory.substack.com/p/archiving-dastak-how-one-theatre>,
Accessed May 12, 2024.

Commercial theatre in Punjabi and Urdu was leading in late 80s by figures like Naheed Khanum, Amanullah, Mastana, and Umer Shareef, known for their slapstick comedy (Fig 6.6).



Fig 6. 6: Umer Sharif in the play, Umer Sharif in *Jungle*
Source: *Youlinmagazine.com*, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/70-years-of-theatre-a-flashback-through-the-ages/OTI0>,
Accessed May 15, 2024.

In 1989, *Bakra Qistoon Pay* and *Buddha Ghar Pe Hai* comedy stage plays gained fame, starring Sharif alongside Akhtar.²⁹⁰ *Bakra Qistoon Pay* highlighted social and political satire, followed by shows like *Yes Sir Eid*, *No Sir Eid* (1989), which were among the first stage performances released on video (Fig 6.7).²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Translations: *Bakra Qistoon Pay* (Goat on Installments) and *Buddha Ghar Pe Hai* (The Old Man is Home).

²⁹¹ Entertainment Desk, "Umar Sharif's Top Five Stage Shows," *The Express Tribune*, October 2, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2322985/umer-sharif-passes-away-king-of-comedys-top-five-stage-shows>.



Fig 6. 7: Scenes from *Bakra Qistoon Pay*, *Buddha Ghar Pe Hai* and *Yes Sir Eid, No Sir Eid* 1989
Source: *Tribune.com.pk*, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2322985/umer-sharif-passes-away-king-of-comedy-stage-top-five-stage-shows>, Accessed May 15, 2024.

One Day Eid Match (1992) was a social and political comedy stage program that humorously represents everyday household issues and political situations (Fig 6.8). The play parody includes topics such as dowry, poverty, the country's governance system, and the deceitful behaviors of people. In spite of its comedic approach, the play also conveys positive messages intended at improvement of the country's situation, cheering viewers to reflect on these important issues and considering ways to build a better society.²⁹²



Fig 6. 8: Scenes from play *One Day Eid Match* (1992)
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGM9lcZdbN4>, Accessed May 22, 2024.

In November 1993, Parallel theatre groups were invited to mainstream bi-annual events at Alhamra theatre winter festival. The political theatre by this time had gained wider acceptance and this led to a steady shift away from fierce political critique to more general social annotation.²⁹³ Groups like Ajoka Theatre and Punjab Lok Rehas, though still engaged in political work, lost much of their earlier impact, even as socio-political issues in Pakistan grew more prominent (Fig 6.9).

²⁹² M3 Media: "Umer Sharif, Shakeel Siddiqui *One Day Eid Match*, Pakistani Comedy Stage Drama," *YouTube*, 2024, 1:46:12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGM9lcZdbN4>.

²⁹³ Sobia Mubarak: "Dramatizing Power and Resistance: Images of Women in Pakistani and Indian Alternative Theater" PDF, 2015, <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2205&context=etd>.

Saanjh was another group which was dedicated to raising awareness about the rights of the rural and lower-class communities.²⁹⁴



Fig 6. 9: Members of the Ajoka Theatre Group, Lahore, Pakistan. Extreme left: Founding Artistic Director Madeeha Gauhar; extreme right: Playwright Shahid Mahmud Nadeem. (Photo Courtesy of Fauzia Afzal Khan)
Source: *Jstor.org*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1146608?origin=crossref>, Accessed May 22, 2024.

In an article;

“A brief history of Pakistani theatre, covering both the commercial and political alternative scenes. Alternative theatre has become more political, stating, the stage has turned into a pulpit, feeding ‘slogans’ to select invitees. On the other hand, commercial theatre focuses on “slapstick repartee, appealing to an audience looking for light-hearted entertainment.”²⁹⁵

According to Mundrawala;

“Political theatre is a cultural practice which combines questioning, analysis and interference with a clear political agenda and demands an active audience; hence, it can contribute to the cultivation of social revolution.”²⁹⁶

Yeh Hai Naya Tamasha (1993), featuring Umer Sharif, was a comedy stage play that amusingly addressed a range of social, societal, and political issues.²⁹⁷ The play is planned in numerous segments, each portraying different scenarios. These include a police station setup, a household with a married couple, a music audition, a poetry recital (Mushaira), a political rally

²⁹⁴ Fawzia Afzal-Khan, “Street Theatre in Pakistani Punjab: The Case of Ajoka, Lok Rehas, and the Woman Question,” *TDR* (1988) 41, no. 3 (1997): 39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1146608>.

²⁹⁵ Fareeha Zaheer, “Theatrical Milieu: Investigating Drama and Theatre in Tandem with Socio-Political Landscape of Pakistan,” *Sir Syed Journal of Education & Social Research* 4, no. 2 (2021): 278–87. [https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol4-iss2-2021\(278-287\)](https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol4-iss2-2021(278-287)).

²⁹⁶ Ahmad Bilal, “Pakistani Theatre: A Unique Cultural Form of South Asia,” *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 85 *South Asian Studies a Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (2018): 85–95. https://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/5_v33_1_18.pdf.

²⁹⁷ Translation: *Yeh Hai Naya Tamasha* (This is the New Spectacle).

(Jalsa), a funeral, among others. Each segment uses humor to sightsee and critique numerous aspects of society, making it an entertaining yet thought-provoking performance (Fig 6.10).²⁹⁸



Fig 6. 10: Scene from stage plays Yeh Hai Naya Tamasha (1993)
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsdtIXsacpE>, Accessed May 30, 2024.

Hamsa Ho to Samn Aaye (1994) was a comedy stage play featuring Umer Sharif and Shakeel Siddiqui.²⁹⁹ The play hilariously tackles various social, societal, and political issues. The segments comprise acts portraying the conditions in police stations and conversations among police officers. The drama highlights topics such as robbery, judicial injustice, corruption, bribery in government offices, and the incompetence of officials. It represents diverse cases brought to the police and how they are handled, often with sitcom-like comments and humorous criticism, shedding light on public and governmental issues. In the next part, the setting shifts to a household where Sharif takes the role of the Station House Officer (SHO) and attempts to live his life, pretending before the family. The play is filled with witty one-liners, spouse clashes, and discussions on various social topics, blending humor with critical commentary (Fig 6.11).³⁰⁰



Fig 6. 11: Scenes from stage play Hamsa Ho to Samn Aaye (1994)
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7-tpEvgtJI>, Accessed May 31, 2024.

²⁹⁸ Hisab Kitab Entertainment, “Yeh Hai Naya Tamasha Complete Show, Umer Shareef,” Posted October 17, 2019, YouTube, 2:15:52, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsdtIXsacpE>.

²⁹⁹ Translation: Hamsa Ho to Samn Aaye (If There Is a Companion, Then Let Them Come Forward).

³⁰⁰ M3 Media Productions, “Umer Sharif and Shakeel Siddiqui Comedy Stage Drama Hum Sa Ho Samne Aye Pakistani Comedy Drama,” Posted 2018, YouTube, By M3 Media Productions, 2:04:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7-tpEvgtJI>.

Teen Bata Teen was a popular Pakistani comedy television series that aired in 1995 and was about the amusing lives of three roommates and their interactions with the world, highlighting the social and life challenges of a simple man (Fig 6.12).³⁰¹



Fig 6. 12: Teen Bata Teen

Source: *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51_AJ0jXzGI, Accessed May 31, 2024.

In 1997, at an international theatre festival in Cairo, Punjab Lok Rehas and Ajoka presented *Bandiwan*.³⁰² Later in same year, Umar Sharif performed a live stage play titled *Umar Sharif Hazir Ho*, which used satire to highlight social and political issues in Pakistan, for instance lack of police responsibility, corruption, terrorism, and other errors.³⁰³ The set up of the play was as a courtroom where Sharif played the character of a lawyer, questioning characters one by one (Fig 6.13).³⁰⁴

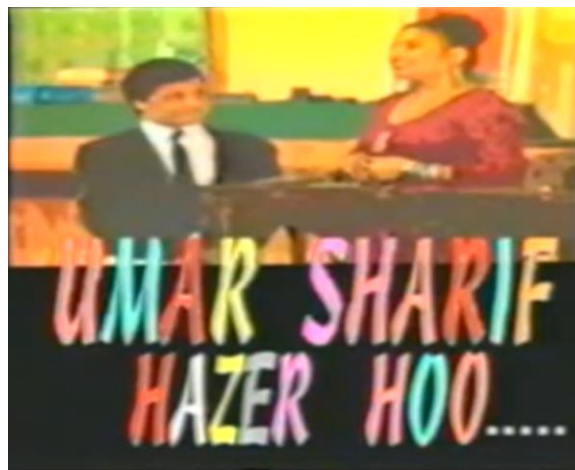


Fig 6. 13: Umer Sharif Hazir Ho, Umer Sharif Popular Comedy Stage Show Drama

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjqbH70qs0k>, Accessed May 31, 2024.

³⁰¹ Translation: Teen Bata Teen (Three divided by Three).

³⁰² Translation: Bandiwan (Prisoner).

³⁰³ Translation: Umar Sharif Hazir Ho (Umar Sharif, Present Yourself).

³⁰⁴ Tahmina Rashid, "Theatre for Community Development: Street Theatre as an Agent of Change in Punjab (Pakistan)," *India Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (2015): 335–47. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45072743>.

In the introduction, Sharif stated,

"This courtroom is not set to punish anyone or make realizations of their crimes, but to shed light on the condition of Pakistan over the past 50 years. This is the court of the public, and we are all responsible for what we have given to Pakistan or what we have done for Pakistan in these past 50 years."³⁰⁵

The first segment, titled *Maa Hazir Ho*, featured a mother, stressing the importance of good upbringing and highlighting social issues.³⁰⁶ In *Police Hazir Ho* and *Traffic Police Hazir Ho*, Sharif interrogated officers about bribery, corruption, low wages, robbery, inflation, and insufficient security funds.³⁰⁷ In the segment *Akhbari Numainda Hazir Ho*, he questioned a journalist about political scandals and their indirect effects on society (Fig 6.16).³⁰⁸



Fig 6. 14: Segments *Maa Hazir Ho*, *Police Hazir Ho*, *Traffic Police Hazir Ho* and *Akhbari Numainda Hazir Ho* from stage play *Umar Sharif Hazir Ho*

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjqbH70qs0k>, Accessed June 2, 2024.

In *Social Worker Hazir Ho*, Sharif spoke about rights and role of women, debating on issues like divorce rates and women's empowerment.³⁰⁹ In *Siyasat Dan Hazir Ho*, he inspected politicians for corruption, manipulation, and injustices.³¹⁰ He emphasized that politician part should be to assist the country and public, instead of doing politics as a business. Other acts encompassed *Air Hostess Hazir Ho*, *Hockey Player Hazir Ho*, *Heroin Hazir Ho* and *Wagon Driver Hazir Ho* with respectively talking on specific social, professional and political concerns (Fig 6.15).

³⁰⁵ Tahmoor Hussain, "Umer Sharif Hazir Ho Popular Pakistan Comedy Stage Show Drama," Posted April 12, 2020, YouTube, 2:16:59, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjqbH70qs0k>.

³⁰⁶ Translation: *Maa Hazir Ho* (Mother be a witness).

³⁰⁷ Translations: *Police Hazir Ho* (Police be a witness), *Traffic Police Hazir Ho* (Traffic Police be a witness).

³⁰⁸ Translation: *Akhbari Numainda Hazir Ho* (Journalist be a witness).

³⁰⁹ Translation: *Social Worker Hazir Ho* (Social Worker be a witness).

³¹⁰ Translation: *Siyasat Dan Hazir Ho* (Politician be a witness).



Fig 6. 15: Social Worker, Siyasat Dan, Air Hostess, Hockey Player, Heroin and Wagon Driver from play Umar Sharif Hazir Ho. Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjqbH70qs0k>, Accessed June 2, 2024.

The last segment of the play ended with an actor representing the voice of public and expressing frustrations about inflation and the life challenges by the average Pakistani. Sharif concluded the show by summarizing Quaid-e-Azam's vision for Pakistan and advising the public to take a stand for their country and elect their leaders wisely. The performance concluded with a message of hope and best wishes for future of Pakistan (Fig 6.16).



Fig 6. 16: Segment Awam Hazir Ho from stage play Umar Sharif Hazir Ho
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjqbH70qs0k>, Accessed June 2, 2024.

In 2003 a stage program titled *Yeh Hay Naya Zamana* was performed by Sharif and others with a specific focus on marriage and women empowerment.³¹¹ The play was about various social and political issues, highlighting the distinctions and privileges between liberal families and the

³¹¹ Translation: *Yeh Hay Naya Zamana* (This is the New Era).

challenges faced by middle-class families in Pakistan. In conclusion, the play's story explores the difficulties of societal norms and the developing dynamics of modern relationships (Fig 6.17).³¹²



Fig 6. 17: Yeh Hay Naya Zamana stage play by Umar Sharif

Source: Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tian9z0CxDI>, Accessed June 6, 2024.

In 2003, Umer Sharif, Sikandar Sanam, and Rauf Lala featured in the Pakistani comedy stage drama *Chand Baraye Farokht*.³¹³ The acts hilariously undertake social and political issues, including the Kashmir conflict, roles and empowerment of women, and the responsibilities of politicians. The play highlighted a skit that parodied politicians, addressing problems like water scarcity, strikes, rallies (Jalsa), budget issues, foreign debt, and the lack of progress in the transportation sector. Sharif predominantly critiqued the false promises and poor reputation of politicians. Additional humorous segment focused on doctors, highlighting how some have turned the profession into a money-making venture, often treating patients carelessly (6.18).³¹⁴

³¹² Alia Bhat, "Yeh Hay Naya Zamana, Umar Sharif," Posted 2018, YouTube, 2:12:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tian9z0CxDI>.

³¹³ Translation: Chand Baraye Farokht (Moon for Sale).

³¹⁴ M3 Media Productions, "Umer Sharif, Sikandar Sanam, Rauf Lala Chand Baraye Farokht Pakistani Comedy Stage Drama," Posted January 21, 2018, YouTube, 2:27:18, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCEd4BspaU8>.



Fig 6. 18: Umer Sharif, Sikandar Sanam, Rauf Lala in Pakistani Comedy Stage Drama Chand Baraye Farokht
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCED4BspaU8>, Accessed June 6, 2024.

Paying Guest, a comedy stage show performed in 2003, was centered around various paying guests and their entertaining conversation with a waiter. The actors playing guests impersonated different nationalities (Fig 6.19). Each character carried a unique comedic perspective, highlighting the relationships between Pakistan and their respective countries through witty dialogue and performances. Sharif ended the play with a note emphasizing the importance of societal and cultural values and promoting peace and harmony among everyone.³¹⁵



Fig 6. 19: Umer Sharif, Sikandar Sanam, Zareen Ghazal in Pakistani Comedy Stage Drama Paying Guest
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmoRGoL8SbY>, Accessed June 6, 2024.

³¹⁵ M3 Media Productions, "Umer Sharif, Sikandar Sanam, Zareen Ghazal Paying Guest Pakistani Comedy Stage Drama," Posted January 18, 2018, YouTube, 2:16:35, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmoRGoL8SbY>.

Hanste Raho Chalte Raho (2003) was a comedy play set up in a Pakistani street, featuring various shops and a market (Fig 6.20).³¹⁶ The play addressed issues like robbery, poverty, and inflation through humor and puns, delivering a message of peace, unity, and love for the country. The performers narrated a poem about Karachi, highlighting its beauty and the beauty of the entire nation. In contrast, another actor opposed by pointing out the thought-provoking conditions in Pakistan, for instance water shortages, power outages, damaged roads, and protests that have made the life of Karachi's residents difficult. The stage play concluded with Sharif wishing and praying for Pakistan's development, happiness, peace and also hoping for an end to hypocrisy.³¹⁷



Fig 6. 20: Umer Sharif Comedy Show Haste Raho Chalte Raho Official Video Laughter King
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiHAPggryeE>, Accessed June 10, 2024.

In 2005, "4 Man Show" premiered as a Pakistani political satire program that revolved around an imaginary parody on TV channel called Channel 4 (Fig 6.21). The show addressed issues like freedom of media, terrorism, corruption, denominationalism, weekly events, film, and entertainment news in a humorous manner. The program mocks news channels, particularly their interview styles. It includes segments such as news bulletins, field reporting, celebrity interviews of newscasters, politicians and sportsman. Topics are discussed in the witty style of Khalid Butt, aiming to provide a laughable spin on both National and International events. The show features interviews, actor impersonating politicians like, Latif Khosa and Khwaja Asif, Abdul Rehman Malik, Nawaz Sharif, Javed Miandad and Mirza Iqbal Baig.³¹⁸ Title of the episodes also varied,

³¹⁶ Translation: *Hanste Raho Chalte Raho* (Keep Smiling, Keep Going).

³¹⁷ Laughter Kings, "Umer Sharif Drama | Umer Sharif Comedy Show | Haste Raho Chalte Raho | Official Video | Laughter King," Posted October 4, 2023, YouTube, 2:03:18, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiHAPggryeE>.

³¹⁸ Kalpana, ed., "4 Man Show - Alchetron, the Free Social Encyclopedia," *Alchetron.com*, August 18, 2017, <https://alchetron.com/4-Man-Show>.

for example, *Asif Ali Zardari ka Qom ko pegam, Kia Imran Khan best politician Hai?* and *Pervez Musharraf ka Quam se Khatib*.³¹⁹



Fig 6. 21: 4 Man Show

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://i.aaj.tv/primary/2023/03/291923160242f2d.jpg>, Accessed June 10, 2024.

On July 14, 2007, *Hum Sub Umeed Se Hain*, a socio-political satire show, was released.³²⁰ The show featured humorous segments on Pakistani political issues and was hosted by Saba Qamar, Fiza Ali, and Mehwish Hayat (Fig 6.22). *Hum Sub Umeed Se Hain* had a bigger cast and a broader panel of actors, segments, and programs. It focused on mocking corrupt and lazy politicians who often manage to intrude the election process to get selected. The TV artists portrayed these politicians through situational comedy, addressing current affairs in Pakistan humorously. Furthermore, each episode included a guest who mimicked an international or national politician. The show primarily dealt with contemporary events, presenting Pakistani political issues in a lighthearted and entertaining manner. The show lasted for 8 years; last episode was telecasted on December 26, 2015.

³¹⁹ Translations: Here are the translations: *Asif Ali Zardari ka Qom ko pegam* (Asif Ali Zardari's message to the nation), *Kia Imran Khan best politician Hai?* (Is Imran Khan the best politician?) and *Pervez Musharraf ka Qom se khatib* (Pervez Musharraf's address to the nation).

³²⁰ Translation: *Hum Sub Umeed Se Hain* (We Are All Expecting).



Fig 6. 22: Hum sab umeed sa hain

Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=178056014758969&set=a.178055994758971>, Accessed June 18, 2024.

Hasb-e-Haal, a political satire show released in 2009, delivers commentary on current affairs (Fig 6.23).³²¹ Sohail Ahmed depicts a character from a lower-middle-class family who frequently overgeneralizes intricate political issues. Fareed Raees frequently scolds him for these simplifications, while Jiya Dilnawaz introduces laugh lines and reads comments of viewers. The show comprises of several sections, with Sohail Ahmed repeatedly imitating as politicians, cricketers, or other celebrities.



Fig 6. 23: Hasb E Haal

Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.facebook.com/HasbEHaal.Official/>, Accessed June 18, 2024.

The Shareef Show Mubarak Ho formerly titled as *The Shareef Show* was a talk show which was hosted by Sharif and debuted on October 26, 2009, it features guests from television sports

³²¹ Translation: Hasb-e-Haal (Relevant to circumstances, according to circumstances, as exigency may require, relevant to what is desired).

and politics. Politician Ghulam Mustafa Khar was the first guest. The show addresses societal, socio-political themes with a satirical twist (Fig 6.24).



Fig 6. 24: The Shareef Show Mubarak Ho
Source: *Wikipedia.org*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Shareef_Show_Mubarak_Ho.jpg,
Accessed June 18, 2024.

Khabarnaak, comedy show telecasted on September 11, 2010 focused on humorous deliberations of politics, current affairs, and social issues, mainly in the Punjabi language.³²² The show featured Mir Mohammad Ali, who dressed up as various personalities, while Ayesha Jahanzeb served as the anchor and co-host (Fig 6.25). A group of comedians contributed their comments and analysis. Cartoonist Imran Bobby also had a role, portraying political scenarios through his cartoons. The show often added a humorous segment where actors imitate Pakistani figures for instance Sheikh Rasheed, Shahbaz Sharif, Maqsood and others.



Fig 6. 25: Khabarnaak
Source: *KhabarNak.geo.tv*, <https://www.facebook.com/KhabarNak.geo.tv/>, Accessed June 18, 2024.

"*Banana News Network*" telecasted on April 10, 2011 till July 29, 2015 was a satirical show, as a fictional news channel that taunted political leaders and celebrities based on events in Pakistan. The show contained segments like Sports Desk, Newsroom, and Central Studio where

³²² Translation: Khabarnaak (Dangerous).

discussions were held. The show humorously reflects the realities of corrupt politicians and glimpses of the public's struggles (Fig 6.25).³²³



Fig 6. 26: Banana News Network

Source: *Reviewit.pk*, <https://reviewit.pk/political-comedy-shows-of-pakistan/>, Accessed June 18, 2024.

In 2012, as part of the World Shakespeare Festival, a Pakistani theatre group performed at the Globe Theatre in London. The National Theatre UK also adapted Ajoka Theatre's period drama "Dara" into English, while a group based in Islamabad Theatre Wallay visited the United States with their production *Daagh Daagh Ujaala*, based on stories of partition (Fig 2.27). Besides activism-based theatre, commercial theatre has also thrived in Pakistan, catering to various audiences.³²⁴

³²³ Moomal Hassan, "Political Comedy Shows of Pakistan," *Review It*, December 15, 2013, <https://reviewit.pk/political-comedy-shows-of-pakistan/>.

³²⁴ Syed Abbas Hussain, "70 Years of Theatre: A Flashback through the Ages," *Youlin Magazine*, August 30, 2017, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/70-years-of-theatre-a-flashback-through-the-ages/OTI0>.



Fig 6. 27: Dara, an Ajoka Production

Source: *Youlinmagazine.com*, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/70-years-of-theatre-a-flashback-through-the-ages/OT10>, Accessed June 20, 2024.

The Dunya Channel show *Siyasi Records*, released on August 2, 2012, offers a humorous take on Pakistani politics through song parodies for instance, Record-ISTASNA (Immunity), *Ik Kursi Ko Dekha*, do vote for me, *Tumhe Dil Lagi Bhool Jaani Paregi*, *Siyasat Ki Raahon Mein Ek Bar Aakar tou Dekho*, Don't Mind, Eid Mubarak, *Jo Ho-Khaba Station*, *Bacha Hai G*, Race winner and more (Fig 6.28).³²⁵



Fig 6. 28: Siyasi Record

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuK-IS23k5k>, Accessed June 30, 2024.

³²⁵ Translations: Siyasi Records (Political Records), *Ik Kursi Ko Dekha*, (I saw a chair), *Tumhe Dil Lagi Bhool Jaani Paregi* (You will have to forget your inclinations), *Siyasat Ki Raahon Mein Ek Bar Aakar tou Dekho* (Just step into the path of politics once and see), *Jo Ho-Khaba Station* (Whatever happens, it is a dream station) and *Bacha Hai G* (It's a child, G).

Darling, a socio-political comedy show, released on June 2, 2013, on Express News was hosted by Khalid Abbas Dar, featuring him inviting several actors to perform imitations or be interviewed. He was engaged in witty chats with dummies representing politicians (Fig 6.29).



Fig 6. 29: Darling on Express News

Source: *Unewstv.com*, <https://www.unewstv.com/tarimgs/darling-on-express-news-comedy-show-12th-february-2017.jpg>, Accessed June 30, 2024.

The show staged various scenarios, such as a Mughal court, to revive conversations about old and new socio-political conditions. Khalid Abbas Dar played a dual role, serving as both the host and a performer alongside a team of comedians who imitated different characters (Fig 6.30).



Fig 6. 30: Khalid Abbas Dar in dual role at show Darling

Source: *Dailymotion.com*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x11emc2>, Accessed June 30, 2024.

The show included numerous segments encouraging music, art, entertainment and media in Pakistan. Notable segment was "Darling Court" where the host amusingly investigated celebrities. In the segment "Siyasical Talk," Dar interviewed dummy politicians, adding a humorous and satirical twist to the discussions.³²⁶ In section "Reporter," a reporter is questioned about the condition of Pakistan with humorous and though provoking conversation. In "*Darling Ka Mehman*," he invited guests for a witty conversation, blending satire in their discussions. In

³²⁶ Translation: Siyasical Talk (Political Talk).

conclusion every episode musical parodies of songs sarcastically targeted politicians and critiqued their work (Fig 6.31).



Fig 6. 31: Scenes from show Darling

Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRHkMfilusY>, Accessed June 30, 2024.

Mazaaq Raat is a stand-up comedy and talk show that was telecasted on August 8, 2013, on Dunya TV, and is hosted by Imran Ashraf. It features a combination of humor and debates on social and political topics (Fig 6.32).³²⁷



Fig 6. 32: Mazaaq Raat

Source: *Dunyanews.tv*,

Source: <https://dunyanews.tv/en/Entertainment/751325-Dunya-News-show-/%27Mazaaq-Raat/%27-tops-TRP-ratings->, Accessed July 6, 2024.

On September 28, 2014, *Samaa Char*, a socio-political comedy show was aired with a live audience set up.³²⁸ The host interacted with fictional characters who answered questions in a comical manner. He engaged with actors imitating as politicians, media activists, and critics, discussing the political condition of Pakistan humorously (Fig 6.33).

³²⁷ Translation: Mazaaq Raat (Joke Night).

³²⁸ Translation: Samaa Char (The Four Seasons or The Four Elements).



Fig 6. 33: Samaa Char

Source: *Dailymotion.com*,

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2dmnlb>, Accessed July 6, 2024.

Theatre Wallay performed the play “*Dagh Dagħ Ujala*” in Islamabad on April 24th, 2015, for three consecutive days.³²⁹ The play was about true tales from their project, Voices of Partition (Fig 6.34). The performance induced a diversity of emotions including happiness, sobs and tears. Marziyeh Ozark remarked about the play in the following words,

"Thought provoking & heart felt performances in *Daagh Daagh Ujala* narrating stories of Partition. Each story told was a lived experience, a people who until then had lived in peace turned suspicious and cynical. As the lands were divided so were the people. One of the most touching scenes is when the Muslim is terrified of the Hindu officer who then simply asks to have ‘Lahore ka Pani.’ Taught to hate one another, to distrust & be suspicious, the most effective lines spoken that the ‘Gora principal’ had come to protect them (Hindu+ Muslim kids) but from whom? What was there to fear?

In addition, Alizeh Khaleeli said,

“*Daagh Daagh Ujala* is a brilliant way to comment about the present situation in Pakistan without actually talking about the present situation.’ Absolutely beautifully done, kudos to the entire team.”³³⁰



Fig 6. 34: Dagħ Dagħ Ujala (This Stained Dawn) is performed in Islamabad

Source: *Theatrewallay.com*, <https://theatrewallay.com/dagh-dagh-ujala-this-stained-dawn-is-performed-in-islamabad/>, Accessed July 10, 2024.

³²⁹ Translation: Dagħ Dagħ Ujala (This Stained Dawn).

³³⁰ Safer Ullah Khan, “Dagħ Dagħ Ujala (This Stained Dawn) Is Performed in Islamabad,” Theatre Wallay, April 30, 2015, <https://theatrewallay.com/dagh-dagh-ujala-this-stained-dawn-is-performed-in-islamabad/>.

Khabardar, sitcom show was telecasted on September 10, 2015, on Express News. It was created and hosted by Aftab Iqbal, featuring him and a team of comedians, who played different roles.³³¹ Each episode is divided into three segments, first part involves a comic skit, where the anchor presents a topic for debate and any comedian shall execute a parody or act according to a short satire skit. The other segment is titled, "The mini theatre," the comedians present short skits that often highlight common social issues (Fig 6.35).



Fig 6. 35: Khabardaar

Source: *Wikipedia.org*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Khabardaar.png>, Accessed July 10, 2024.

On May 17, 2017, *Geo Giggles*, a satirical animated show on socio-political topics was telecasted. The show included episodes such as The Law-Abiding Nation, New year New Fear, Snakes at stake, A Stroke of Strike, Resignation is in the INN Fashion, Hospital Bill, Inflammatory Inflation, Blood after Flood, To Be Healthy, Wealthy & Vice and Law Avoiding Citizen (Fig 6.36).



Fig 6. 36: Geo-giggles

Source: *Geo.tv*, <https://www.geo.tv/shows/geo-giggles>, Accessed July 10, 2024.

³³¹ Translation: Khabardar (Be careful).

On May 23, 2018, *Chowki No. 420* premiered as a sitcom drama that humorously portrayed the incompetency of Pakistani police and police stations (Fig 6.37). The show period spans over two seasons.³³²

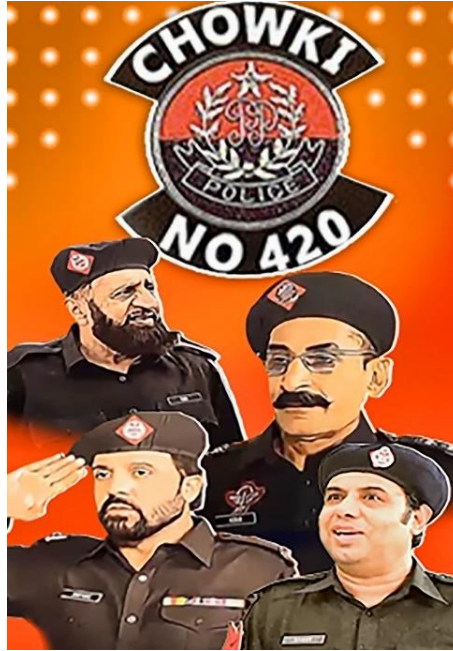


Fig 6. 37: Chowki No. 420

Source: Comedycorner.tv,

<https://comedycorner.tv/public/upload/source/CHOWKI%20420%20476x678.webp>,

Accessed July 10, 2024.

On August 5, 2018, the socio-political comedy show *Q. K. Jamhuriat Hai* premiered, featuring humorous parodies of politicians and about the current situation in Pakistan (Fig 6.38).³³³



Fig 6. 38: Q K Jamhuriat Hai

Source: *I.yting.com*, https://i.yting.com/vi/4ZV_tdJSmpw/maxresdefault.jpg, Accessed July 10, 2024.

³³² Translation: Chowki No. 420 (Station No. 420).

³³³ Translations: Q K Jamhuriat Hai (Why is there Democracy?).

On August 20, 2018, as Imran Khan began his tenure as the 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan, the political satire *Panja Shikanja* premiered at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.³³⁴ The play was scripted and directed by Jamal Shah and discovers the dark side of politics and the inequality among the common people and the elite. *Panja Shikanja* features a cast of characters, including a brooding cat with five kittens, an expositor rooster, a sarcastic dog, a rebellious laborer, and a sadistic kin. The story begins with a blind beggar describing the story of a laborer named Miru and his cat, who gives birth to kittens that chant "Long Live the King" at birth, drawing widespread attention and flashing a battle for their ownership. This clash includes an honest policeman, an investor from China, a corrupt politician, a greedy religious leader, a social worker, and her megalomaniac husband (Fig 6.39).³³⁵



Fig 6. 39: The cat and the kittens and the fight for the kittens

Source: *Youlinmagazine.com*, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/theatre-review-panja-shikanja-at-pnca/MTIwOQ==>, Accessed July 12, 2024.

Panja Shikanja discoursed societal issues, prompting the audience to reflect on integrity and their societal roles. The play skillfully balances profound dialogue with humor, leaving the audience in both thoughtful silence and laughter (Fig 6.40).

³³⁴ Translation: *Panja Shikanja* (The Iron Fist).

³³⁵ Mirza Salam Ahmed, "Panja Shikanja at PNCA," *Youlin Magazine*, August 20, 2018, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/theatre-review-panja-shikanja-at-pnca/MTIwOQ==>.



Fig 6. 40: The King's court

Source: *Youlinmagazine.com*, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/theatre-review-panja-shikanja-at-pnca/MTIwOQ==>, Accessed July 12, 2024.

On August 21, 2018, *Joke Dar Joke* telecasted as a socio-political satire show that humorously talks about various issues in a cheerful way (Fig 6.41).³³⁶



Fig 6. 41: Joke Dar Joke

Source: <https://comedycorner.tv/public/upload/source/JOKE%20DAR%20JOKE%20476x678.webp>, Accessed July 19, 2024.

On October 29, 2018, *Himaqaten*, a satire and political debate-based program premiered on 92 News channel. Aftab Iqbal was a co-host and a political analyst who was accompanied by Iqra Haris. It also featured the famous TV actor Mehmood Aslam, who takes on multiple personas

³³⁶ Translation: Joke Dar Joke (Jokes with a Punch or Punchline Jokes).

throughout the show. The combination of political satire and comedy makes the show entertaining and thought-provoking (Fig 6.42).³³⁷



Fig 6. 42: Aftab Iqbal Comedy Show, Himaqatain
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnDUugurJJk>, Accessed July 19, 2024.

On November 19, 2018, *Khabarzar*, an Urdu and Punjabi comedy show was aired on Aap News (Fig 6.43).³³⁸ *Khabarzar* was the fourth show in a similar genre created and hosted by Aftab Iqbal. The show featured a diversity of segments. One of the main segments was on current News, where the actors' executed parodies based on absurd news stories. In parody films, the show taunted iconic movies by altering characters to symbolically represent current sociopolitical issues. The segment guests from The Dummy Museum comprised of satire interviews with dummy personalities of politician like Yousaf Raza Gillani and actress Meera. The Police Station segment offered a humorous take on local law enforcement. Whereas, Mughal Court compared current government affairs to past Mughal events while, The Bangali Baba segment offered humorous political gossip. Unique to the show, the theater segment presented serious depictions of noteworthy historical events and social issues through stage performances.

³³⁷ Translation: Himaqaten (an act of folly).

³³⁸ Translation: Khabarzar (It implies keeping a watchful eye on news and social commentary, often with a humorous or satirical twist).



Fig 6. 43: Khabarzar

Source: *Imdb.com*, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10589798/?ref_=tt_mv_close, Accessed July 19, 2024.

On December 1, 2018, the social and political comedy show *Seeti 41* premiered, featuring the popular anchor dubbing Sajjad Jani (Fig 6.44). The show is packed with entertainment and includes episodes like *Gareeb Awam Ki Awaz* and *Ration Par Jugat*.³³⁹



Fig 6. 44: Seeti 41

Source: *Comedycorner.tv*, <https://comedycorner.tv/public/upload/source/SEETI%2041.webp>, Accessed July 20, 2024.

³³⁹ Translations: *Gareeb Awam Ki Awaz* (Voice of the Poor People), *Ration Par Jugat* (Jokes About Ration) and *Seeti 41* (Whistle 41).

Theatre Wallay premiered the play *Siasat at 8pm* on January 4th, 2019, with support from Open Society Foundations in Islamabad and Lahore (Fig 6.45).³⁴⁰ It was a comedy play that satirizes prime time talk shows and political leaders. It comprised of two acts set five years apart, both during election years. The first act focuses on traditional political figures, while the second act highlights the recent slogans "change" and "naya" with new leaders. Both political parties claimed to take care of the poor and progress of the country. The play examines their claims, offering a perspective on their legitimacy. Audiences were invited to be part of the fictional TV Talk Show *Siasat at 8 pm*, hosted by A. D. Chaudhry, who discussed current societal issues with prominent guests. The play humorously critiques how the media, politicians, and social workers address these issues.³⁴¹



Fig 6. 45: *Siasat @ 8 PM*

Source: *Theatrewallay.com*, <https://theatrewallay.com/plays/siasat-8-pm/>, Accessed July 20, 2024.

Zaban Daraz telecasted on January 21, 2019, was a talk show brimming with deep humor and political satire, including humorous imitations of politicians including Hamza Shahbaz and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari (Fig 6.46).³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Translation: *Siasat at 8pm* (Politics at 8pm).

³⁴¹ "Siasat at 8 PM," *Theatre Wallay*, 2018, <https://theatrewallay.com/plays/siasat-8-pm/>.

³⁴² Translation: *Zaban Daraz* (Big mouth).

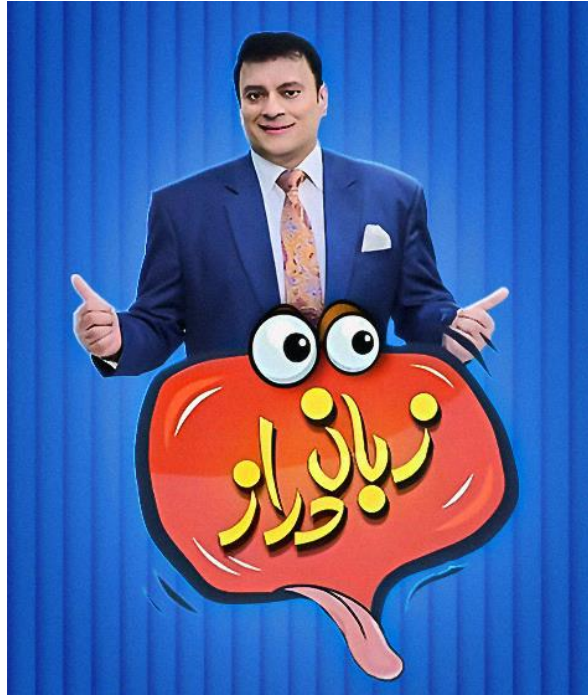


Fig 6. 46: Zaban Daraz

Source: *Comedycorner.tv*, <https://comedycorner.tv/series-detail/85?page=1>, Accessed July 20, 2024.

On May 15, 2019, *Siyasi Theatre*, a political satire show was telecasted on Express News and was hosted by the Syed Wasi Shah.³⁴³ The program which is filled with humor and engaging commentary invites guests from politics, showbiz and sports to share stories related to their personal life and career. The show also comprises of singers like Ali Abbas and Maham Rehman, and co-host Zariya, who reads interesting news from investigation and comedic parodies. Comedians like Sardar Kamal, Chand Baral, Akmal Rahi, Babu Rana, and Taria Taddy bring extra humor with their acts (Fig 6.47).³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Translation: *Siyasi Theatre* (Political Theater).

³⁴⁴ “*Siyasi Theater*,” *Comedy Corner Tv*, 2023, <https://comedycorner.tv/series-detail/92?page=1>.

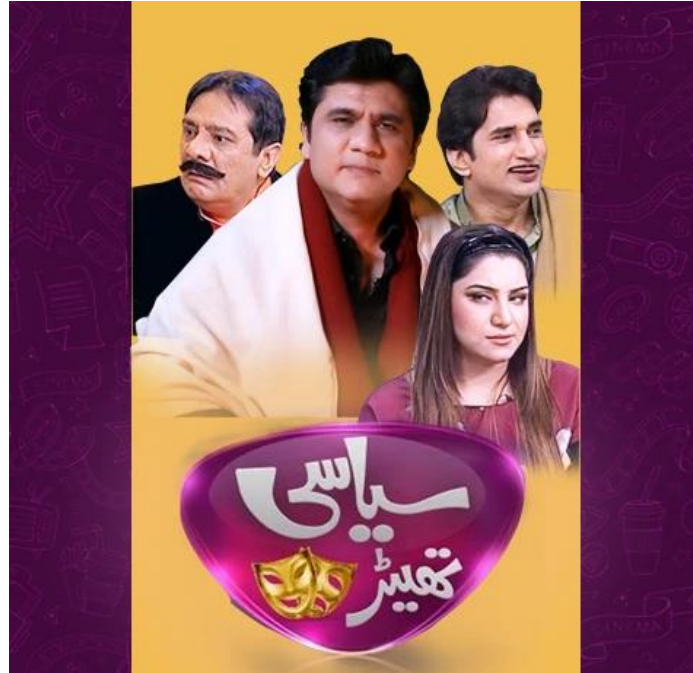


Fig 6. 47: Siyasi Theater

Source: Comedycorner.tv, <https://comedycorner.tv/series-detail/92?page=1>, Accessed July 31, 2024.

On January 23, 2020, *Khabaryar with Aftab Iqbal*, debuted on GWAI, a socio-political comedy program that featured a live audience and a crew of comedians who use humor and sarcasm to remark on various issues in Pakistan. The show humorously critiques politicians by imitating them along with discussions on social issues (Fig 6.48).³⁴⁵



Fig 6. 48: Khabaryar with Aftab Iqbal Episode 1, January 23, 2020, GWAI

Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hBkzOtWRCg>, Accessed July 31, 2024.

³⁴⁵ Translation: Khabaryar (Be Informed).

On April 7, 2020, Neo News aired *National Alien Broadcast*, *NAB*, a political satire show that humorously addressed political issues. The host interacted with characters portraying politicians and asking them amusing questions (Fig 6.49).

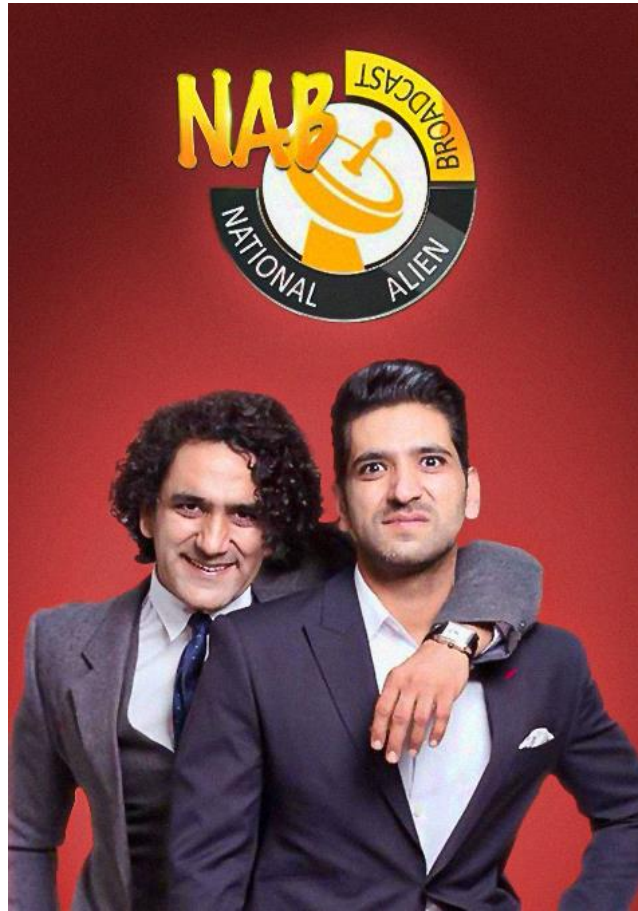


Fig 6. 49: NAB-A political satire

Source: Comedycorner.tv, <https://comedycorner.tv/public/upload/source/NAB%20476x678.png>, Accessed July 31, 2024.

*Desi Sh*tcom* (2020) was telecasted during the global pandemic, when a group comprising of a Pakistani, an Indian, a Bengali, and an American come together in an apartment building. The show depicted life during the lockdown and how these individuals tried to find ways to survive and have fun in *desi* style (Fig 6.50).³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ Translation: Desi (The word "Desi" comes from the Sanskrit word "Desh" meaning "country". The word "Desi" is used to refer to something "from the country" and with time its usage shifted towards referring to people, cultures, and products of a specific region; for example, desi food, desi calendars, and desi dress).



Fig 6. 50: Desi Sh*tcom

Source: *Imdb.com*, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13179752>, Accessed July 31, 2024.

Hoshyarian, released on May 13, 2021, is a socio-political show featuring Marhoom Ahmad Bilal, Irza Khan, and Saleem Albaila (Fig 6.51).³⁴⁷



Fig 6. 51: Hoshyarian

Source: *Imdb.com*, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt26930828/mediaviewer/rm3129747457/>, Accessed August 1, 2024.

On July 21, 2021, *Gup Shab* was premiered which was a socio-political comedy show hosted by Vasay Chaudhry, along with comedians like Iftikhar Thakur and Qaiser Piya.³⁴⁸ The show includes interviews of guests from different fields like showbiz, politics, sports, and business.

³⁴⁷ Translation: Hoshyarian (The Clever Ones or The Sharp-Witted Ones).

³⁴⁸ Translation: Gup Shab (Chat Night).

It promises a hilarious experience filled with laughter, witty banter and games with the guests (Fig 6.52).



Fig 6. 52: Gup Shab Title Revealer, Vasay Chaudhry, Iftikhar Thakur, QaiserPiya SAMA TV
Source: *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mi9dPoKgTJQ&list=PLlnT0gly5Xc60N8qPmmOO-aHjmo5xrKwD&index=707>, Accessed August 1, 2024.

On January 5, 2022, *Khabarhar with Aftab Iqbal*, socio-political satire program hosted by Aftab Iqbal and a team of comedians telecasted on GWAI channel. Its second season was aired on May 4, 2024.³⁴⁹ The show highlights topics infused with humor including drama, politics, news, history, arts, literature and sports in Pakistan. One notable segment, titled "Dummy Museum," featured humorous imitations of politicians, offering a satirical critique of their actions and progress (Fig 6.53).



Fig 6. 53: Khabarhar with Aftab Iqbal
Source: *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwB0-j3nDLg&list=PLnyaZ9PQ2xt5_zQn1uzb8mStJSPKf2rXl&index=490, Accessed August 1, 2024.

³⁴⁹ Translation: Khabarhar (Pay attention).

On February 7, 2022, The Azad Theatre staged the comedy play *Deewana Bakar-e-Khaish Hushyaar* at the Alhamra Art Center.³⁵⁰ It was written by Rafi Peer in the early 60s, featuring characters with dual personalities and was set in a haveli where everyone appeared hypocritical, hiding their true nature behind a facade of likability. Malik Aslam from Azad Theatre explained to Dawn that the play depicted societal hypocrisy, showing how people conceal their real selves (Fig 6.54).³⁵¹



Fig 6. 54: The Azad Theatre staged comedy play *Deewana Bakar-e-Khaish Hushyaar* at the Alhamra Art Center
Source: *Dawn.com*, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1673694>, Accessed August 1, 2024.

Hasna Mana Hai, hosted by Tabish Hashmi premiered on May 3, 2022 on Geo news. Each episode presents a tricky situation, which they attempt to resolve using hilarious tactics about institutions, norms, government policies, corruption, biasness, political misadventures, jealousy, interference, snobbery, and belittling others. The performers often taunt one another with humorous remarks, reflecting a past plagued by street power struggles, political affiliations, and a tendency toward easy money and influence (Fig 6.55).

³⁵⁰ Translation: *Deewana Bakar-e-Khaish Hushyaar* (A Fool Considers Himself Clever).

³⁵¹ Shoaib Ahmed, "Azad Theatre's Comedy Play Marks End of Drama Festival," *Dawn*, February 7, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1673694>.



Fig 6. 55: Hasna Mana Hai Eid Special Tabish Hashmi Episode 01
Source: Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7bJdYehtQI>, Accessed August 1, 2024.

The show had two parallel strands. The host entertains the audience with socio-political stories, guest entrances, short skits, quirky individuals, achievers, trivial but fascinating conquests, social unconventionalities, literature, cultural individuality, music, parodies, and stand-up comedy (Fig 6.56). Simultaneously, the main storyline explains the characters imitating a wrestler, a policeman, a professor, Pehalwan's daughter of a wrestler who acts like a wannabe actress, a foreign-returned Pakistani, wife of a wrestler, a shopkeeper, a poet, a fat man (an idle youth), and a singer among others.



Fig 6. 56: Scenes from show Hasna Mana Hai
Source: Youtube.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XfWml72Q_c, Accessed August 1, 2024.

Dar Aur Darling, premiered on June 14, 2023, is the latest season of the socio-political comedy show *Darling*. The concept closely mirrors the original *Darling* show by Khalid Abbas Dar, who also serves as the host of this new season (Fig 6.57).



Fig 6. 57: Dar Aur Darling Ep 01

Source: Youtube.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVWVni4Hg_c, Accessed August 1, 2024.

The theater play *Patriot & Abdullah*, played on September 8, 2023, was a humorous theatrical journey that sightsees the dynamics between the wealthy and their loyal assistants, set against the backdrop of changing political and religious tides with a powerful blend of wit (Fig 6.58).

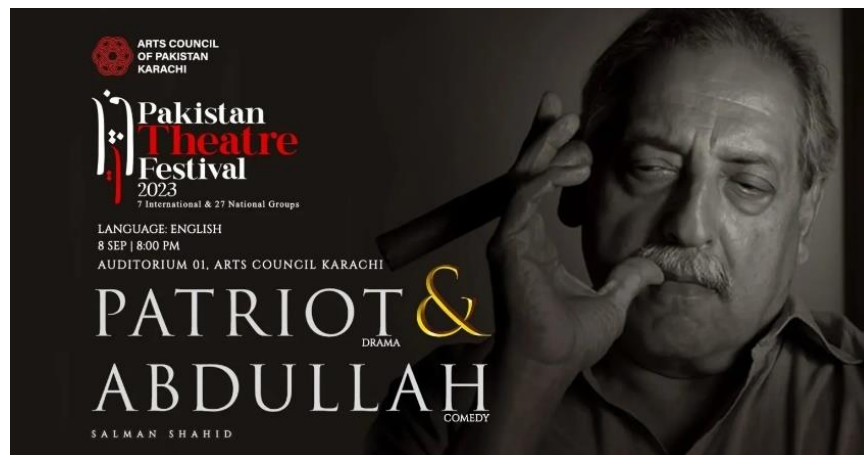


Fig 6. 58: Patriot & Abdullah

Source: Eventsinkarachi.com, <https://eventsinkarachi.com/past-events/patriot-abdullah-08-sept/>, Accessed August 1, 2024.

Premiered on April 10, 2024, *Public Demand* is a talk show with profound humor and socio-political satire hosted by Mohsin Abbas Haider on Public News. The show featured Shakeel Siddiqui, Shery Nanha, and other eminent theater and TV personalities (Fig 6.59).



Fig 6. 59: Public Demand with Mohsin Abbas Haider
Source: *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOW_ktVV17Q, Accessed August 1, 2024.

In this chapter, the socio-political comedy shows in Pakistan that emerged outside the realm of Maqsood's work was reviewed to analysis other prominent writers, comedians and productions contributions to the evolution of socio-political comedy in Pakistan. The chapter focused on analysis of other prominent works by writers, comedians and production houses that played a significant role in shaping the genre. They contributed in the evolution of socio-political comedy by each carrying their own voice and perception to address political and societal issues of the time. Comedians for instance Akhtar, Sharif, and other theater groups employed comedy as a means to express political and social discontent that reflect on the cultural shifts occurring across the nation. to expose the contradictions and tensions in society. By addressing serious issues with wit, they formed a space for critical discourse that could resonate with a wider audience without the fear of restriction.

Moreover, the chapter explores how these shows emphasized the struggles of the average Pakistani citizen and reflecting the daily life problems faced by the public. From highlighting issues such as government corruption and economic disparity to addressing societal norms like gender roles, these shows were more than mere entertainment they became platforms for social and political commentary, deeply influencing public thought. By broadening the scope beyond Maqsood's contributions, the chapter underscores the diversity within Pakistan's entertainment industry. Additionally, discovers how these shows addressed political discontent, societal challenges and cultural shifts by often using satire and humor as tools to critique and imitate on the state of the nation. By examining works outside of Maqsood's influence, the chapter highlights the diversity and richness of socio-political commentary in Pakistan's entertainment industry.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Comedy in Pakistan has long been a powerful medium of entertainment. From the lively stage of theater or from the screen of television, comedy has played a vital role in reflecting the political, cultural and social landscapes of the country. Satire in theatre, performing arts, and television shows have held an appreciated position within the cultural and social framework of Pakistan and has managed to revolve through various regimes while maintaining a balance between humor and censorship. Socio-political comedy in specific has aided as a mirror to society highlighting issues for instance corruption, political uncertainty and social injustices. It has provided a voice to the voiceless, using wit as a tool to examine the powerful and aggravate thought among audiences. This genre has been significant in developing critical thinking and making complex issues more accessible to the public.

While socio-political comedy in Pakistan faces challenges, including censorship and the risks associated with tackling sensitive topics, it remains resilient. The evolution of this genre is an evidence of creativity of Pakistani comedians and writers who continue to push boundaries to challenge societal and political norms. As Pakistan continues to grapple with its socio-political authenticities, comedy has unquestionably remained a vital part of its cultural dissertation, offering both relief and reflection in equal measure. Despite facing restrictions throughout its history, theatre and television shows have gained greater significance with the expansion of media. The work of Maqsood in socio-political comedy theatre, plays, and television shows has served as a catalyst, opening up new dimensions for contemporary media influencing practitioners across these fields.

In this research while connecting the trends set by Maqsood's work in Pakistan, it is noted that the rise of entertaining social and politics issues was predictable as news television expanded, leading to a rejection of traditional news formats. After exploring the writing style established by Maqsood in verbal and performance satire it is apparent that contemporary shows began to establish socio-political satire, influenced by Maqsood's work. In his writing of political satire programs, he skillfully blended his scripts, playwrights, satirists, and stories with humorous one-liners jokes, intertwined with imitated characters. This approach became a model for future socio-political comedy formats in Pakistani TV shows and plays. Maqsood's methods of addressing

politics and culturally embedded processes of holding the powerful accountable has been widely adapted and continue to influence the genre.

The theater plays from 1947 to 1960 (as mentioned in Chapter 5) were primarily based on true stories of the partition between Pakistan and India. Although sarcasm existed but it was not the main focus. The plays were centered on the communal, societal, and political challenges faced by the people who experienced the pre and post partition trials. These stories were deeply rooted in emotions and were based on real incidents, with a few elements of comedy to create brief moments of levity for the audience. Whereas, when Maqsood wrote the last few episodes of Zia Mohyeddin stage show (1969–1973), he consciously took a comical turn to address the socio-political issues with wit. Hence, addressing social, political, and societal topics that later became the defining format of the show. His witty dialogues and ability to confront serious issues in a humorous way made the show a massive hit and marked a significant success in the writing career of Maqsood. This led to the production of more similar genre shows on PTV that solidified his reputation as a master of socio-political satire in the entertainment industry of Pakistan.

According to this research, Maqsood's signature writing style in shows like *Aik Sachi Chuk*, *Amma*, *Naadan Nadia*, *Nasri Ganey*, *Karim Shahab ka Ghar* (1990), *Funony Latifay* (1980), long play *Aik thi Safia*, *Dour e Janoon*, *Chun Chunao* and *Rozi* tackled topics like unemployment, inflation, the struggle for basic household needs, the military regime, economic hardship and social inequality all resonated the challenges faced by the masses and which were depicted in the mentioned theater plays. The use of satire is a common thread, as his shows employ wit to address serious themes, a technique that was often reflected in the theater productions and TV shows. Additionally, all these works challenge social norms and question the status quo. The protagonists in these stories are often played as voice of ordinary citizens, reflecting the struggles of the common man in Pakistan. Similarly, these same themes were seen in theater plays and television shows later. For instance, the theater plays *Yeh Hai Naya Tamasha* (1993), *Hamsa Ho to Samn Aaye* (1994), *Umar Sharif Hazir Ho* (1997), and *Chand Baraye Farokht* (2003) all reconnoiter issues like the election system, martial law and military rule through humor and satire.

Maqsood's iconic television show *Fifty Fifty* (1979) and *Aangan Terha* (1984), were a masterful blend of wit, satire, and understated humor, which played a pivotal role in the show's success. It was deeply rooted in Pakistani culture, addressing social and political issues through

comedy. The show navigated around censorship by using innuendos and critique of government, societal norms, and corruption. The similarity of these shows is evident from later shows like, *Khawaja and Sons* (1985), *Zard Dopher* (1995), *Janjal Pura* (1997), *Family front* (1997), *Kollege Jeans* (1999) and *Shashlik* (2001).

This research also highlights the hosting style of Maqsood and the performance of comedians on shows like *Showtime*, *Show Sha*, *Silver Jubilee*, *Studio Dhai*, *Apka Anwar Maqsood* and *Studio Pone Teen*, *Chaar Bees* among others. It emphasizes the blend of Punjabi comedic elements with Urdu language and a special focus on corruption and dishonesty within society. In short, the show blends humor with pointed commentary on socio-political landscape of Pakistan. This blend was later adopted by stage performers from Karachi, as Maqsood's written shows brought socio political satire to a wider audience and artists adopted the style particularly in shows such as, in *Hanste Raho Chalte Raho* (2003), *4 Man Show*, *Paying Guest*, *Teen Bata Teen* among others.

A significant turning point in the evolution of socio-political satire in Pakistan can be witnessed with the beginning of *Loose Talk* (2002). The show presented a simple yet impactful setup with Maqsood as the host and Akhtar impersonating various characters as the guest. This setup laid the groundwork for later shows, which adopted the concept of impersonating political figures, celebrities, and others to humorously depict the quirks and incidents in Pakistan. The show became immensely popular, ensuring that audiences were thoroughly entertained often leading to fits of uncontrollable laughter. Even in 2024, clips from *Loose Talk* remain popular, frequently going viral for their sharp one-liners and biting satire on Pakistani politics. One episode that stands out particularly is Episode 251, which features Akhtar in the role of a harmonium player, a performance that continues to be celebrated for its humor and keen social, economic and political commentary. It is apparent that the unique hosting style of Maqsood and Akhtar's impersonation of different characters during the interview talks was adopted by several other closely aligned shows such as, *Hum Sab Umeed Say Hain*, *Hasb-e-Haal*, *Banana News Network*, *Khabardar*, *Khabarzar*, *Khabaryar*, *Khabarhar*, *Mazaaq Raat*, *Himaqaten*, *Seeti 4*, *Hoshyarian*, *Gup Shab* and *Hasna Mana Hai*. This show also introduced the idea of song production parodies and funny *Mushairas*, specifically in episode *Mushaira Ulat Deta Hoon* where Akhtar performed a *mushaira* based on the social and political situation of Pakistan. This practice has been widely accepted by

approximately every socio-political satire show for instance, *Siyasi Records* (2012), *Darling* (2013), *Samaa Char* (2014), *Geo Giggles* (2017), *Q K Jamhuriat Hai* (2018), *Zaban Daraz* (2019), *Gup Shab* (2021), *Hoshyarian* (2021), *Dar Aur Darling* (2023) and *Public Demand* (2024). This practice is also reflected in television shows, where a funny skit about social and political issues is presented. It seems that the legacy of *Loose Talk* is still alive, as subsequent shows have expanded this format often featuring larger casts for impersonating personalities to continue the tradition of loose talk satirical commentary in Pakistan.

In a nutshell, Maqsood's influence on socio-political comedy spreads beyond television shows, as it can not only be seen in writing, hosting, acting but also in the realm of theater. His plays, such as *Sawa 14 August*, *Anwar Maqsood Ka Dharna*, *Hua Kuch Yoon*, *Mujhe Kyun Nikala*, *Khuda Hafiz*, *Naach Na Jaane Aangan Terha*, *Naya Pakistan*, *Saadhay 14 August*, *Pawnay 14 August* and *Siachen* (discussed in detail in Chapter 4), have set the stage for raising the societal, political and cultural issues for others to follow. For example, plays like *Daagh Daagh Ujaala* (2012), *Panja Shikanja* (2018), *Siasat at 8PM* (2019), *Deewana Bakar-e-Khaish Hushyaar* (2022) and *Abdullah and Patriot* (2023), (examined in Chapter 5) draw from similar themes, exploring social, political, and economic issues. The work of Maqsood has aided as a blueprint for guiding others in creating impactful shows that reflect the complexities of society and politics with humor.

Conclusively, contributions of Maqsood's work considering socio-political comedy in Pakistan has been extensive and transformative. His work has not only entertained but also educated and provoked thought, creating a rich legacy that continues to influence today's television shows and theater plays. While examining the socio-political comedy genre in Pakistan, with a focus on media, particularly television, we observe the pronounced influence of Maqsood's work, including his hosting and writing style. Though this study has discussed his socio-political paintings which had no direct influence on TV shows, nor did it have any direct impact on future shows, nevertheless it has helped to create awareness among the art community. Therefore, it was important to cover his paintings that can be associated with socio-political themes to give a holistic approach of his contribution to this genre.

Finally, his ability to blend wit with social critique has made him a guiding star in the development of Pakistani satire since several decades and his influence has and continues to shape the socio-political comedy landscape of Pakistan. In short Maqsood's influence on socio-political

comedy in Pakistan has left an ineffaceable mark on the nation's television shows and theater plays. The impact of Maqsood's innovative approaches to hosting and content creation is evident in how these techniques have been adapted and evolved in contemporary shows. Over time, his work has aided as a foundation and a guidepost for upcoming generations in shaping the growth of socio-political satire in Pakistan, as contemporary shows and plays have built on the foundation that he laid years ago. Maqsood's impact on Pakistani media remains a testament to the power of comedy as a tool for social and political commentary.

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