



RESEARCH PAPER

Pakistani Painters following a Certain Genre of Painting: Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, Ali Azmat and Mughees Riaz

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ABSTRACT

This article is intended to document the paintings of those specific artists who are working to some extent in a similar genre of painting. Artworks of these artists have been included in this article who belong to a similar Art institute in Pakistan College of Art and Design Punjab University Lahore. Paintings of Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, Ali Azmat, and Mughees Riaz are under discussion. This article discusses the utilization of different visual elements such as human figures, plants, trees, and fauna in the artwork of these artists. It explores the compositional similarities, color palette choices, and the presence of social and religious themes apparent in their paintings. The purpose of writing this article is also to investigate the idea that either of these three artists does belong to a particular school of thought as they have spent so many years working together in the same art institute in Pakistan. The aim and objective of this research are also to disseminate in-depth knowledge about their style of painting and the influences their paintings have over each other. Their subject matter may vary in different contexts but the style of painting these three artists share have astonishing similarities.

KEYWORDS Genre of Painting, Pakistani Painters

Introduction

Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, Mughees Riaz, and Ali Azmat these three artists have utilized the strength of their brush and have done their catharsis by painting multiple thought provoking canvases in so many years. These artists have remained part of the art academia and that is one of the reason that young generation too admires their painting styles. These three painters have spent a long period of time while teaching, painting and doing their painting exhibitions together in different cities of Pakistan. There are certain features, inspirations in their painted canvases which have interesting similarities which need to be discussed. Comparison of their paintings has been done in this research to investigate about such similarities.

Literature Review

The study focus on three prominent artists namely Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, Mughees Riaz, and Ali Azmat, who have all emerged from the College of Art & Design at Punjab University, Lahore. These three artists have been chosen due to their unique connection, as the latter two have had the privilege of being mentored by Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud. Ali Azmat and Mughees Riaz after completing their degrees in the subject of painting offered jobs in the same institute and Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud remained Principal of the College of Art & Design at Punjab University from 2009 till her retirement in 2013. (Alam, 2019, p.48). Ali Azmat and Mughees Riaz did their MFA in painting in 1999 and also started doing jobs as art educators in the same department.

Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud did her M.A. in Fine Arts in 1976 from Punjab University and in 1980 she was called back by the department to join as an art teacher. (Hashmi, 2009, p. 136). In 1995 she did her M.A. in Art and Design from Kingston University London and also completed her Ph.D. in 2010 from the same institute. Mughees Riaz also completed his

MPhil in 2015. The subject matter of his paintings has evolved over time. In his early paintings, he focused on painting visual elements such as, human figures, pitchers, buffaloes, and crows as individual entities. From the year 2000 onward, he began creating compositions where all the aforementioned elements intertwine with one another, conceptually reinforcing the overall painting.

Ali Azmat also did his MPhil from the College of Art and Design at Punjab University Lahore. He has done various exhibitions at national and international levels including his Murat series, Sirat-e- mustaqeem, Dangal series, Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom, and Larger than Life series. The subject matter of his paintings vary in his different series of paintings but the rendering and treatment of painted visual elements remained consistent. In his series of paintings "Larger than Life", he did experimentation with the scale of the painting and even in the selection of mediums.

All these three artists have done voluminous exhibitions at national and international levels as well. All of them are succeeding towards a realistic style of painting. Although their work has evolved with time still hints of influences are evident in their painting compositions, usage of space, nature, color selection, and even in the utilization of a single human figure juxtaposed with otherworldly elements.

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature. Qualitative research method has been implemented to conduct this research.

Results and Discussion

Rahat Naveed Masud is one of the most prominent female painters who has established an influence through her artwork on the coming generation of painters in Pakistan. Visuals of her paintings are embellished with various elements taken from nature and surroundings. The artist skillfully incorporates flora, fauna, and especially fruits alongside worldly objects such as cages, keys, locks, and more. In her early works, she focused on the portrayal inner sentiments of female and painted them in sitting positions contrast with living and nonliving entities like empty glass bottles and flowers (plate 1).



Plate. 1: Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, Inner Space, oil on canvas, available at Lahore Art Gallery.

Gradually, her work revolved around the socio-political situation of Pakistan, especially in Lahore where in 2008 near GPO suicide bombing took place. Her painting Aye Arz-e-Watan (plate 2) depicts this social upheaval in an indirect way where again the painter has chosen the female figure to represent the fertile land and soil of Pakistan. She painted mango that symbolized the worth and bounties of this land, as it is available in abundance. If one carefully examines, the background of the figure in this painting the grey-colored smoke symbolizes the aftermath of the bomb blast (R.Naveed, personal communication, January 04, 2023).



Plate.2, Dr. Rahet Naveed Masud, Aye Arz-e-Watan 1, 111.8 x 88.9 cm, oil on canvas, in the collection of Mr.Ali Jamil, Karachi. Source: Naveed Maud, R.(2011). *Ishq series* [Exhibition catalogue].Lahore, Pakistan: Ejaz Galleries.

The body of work she produced with the title of *Ishq series* while she was doing her doctorate was embedded with the symbolism of divine love and spirituality (Art scene Gallery.2011) as evident in one of her paintings titled “Red” (plate. 3).

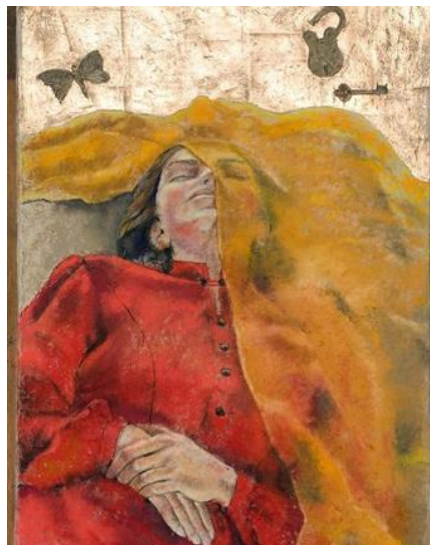


Plate.3, Dr.Rahet Naveed Masud, Red, 2008, 701 x 762 cm, pastel with gold leaf on handmade paper, in Mr. Shahzad Saeed’s Collection in Karachi. Source: Naveed Maud, R. (2011). *Ishq series* [Exhibition catalog].Lahore, Pakistan: Ejaz Galleries.

Though she practiced on diverse topics, her most common subject is depicting a single female figure either sitting in isolation or reclining under an open sky facing towards stars. Marjorie Hussain writes that Colin David once praised Rahat Naveed’s ability to capture the true inner emotions of her model in her paintings and insisted to paint her self-portrait in a pose in which her face is not identifiable. She doesn’t need a facial expression to execute her sitter’s inner soul on canvas. According to Marjorie Hussain this quality still prevails in her paintings from the *Ishq series* and reminds of the pensive females lost in contemplation as can be seen in (plate. 4) entitled “Red Sun”.(Naveed Maud,2011.p.2).



Plate.4, Dr. Rahet Naveed Masud, The Red Sun, 2011,111.7 x 196.8 cm, oil on canvas, in Mrs. Uzma Murad's Collection. Source: Naveed Maud, R. (2011). *Ishq series* [Exhibition catalog].Lahore, Pakistan: Ejaz Galleries.

In these series faces of female figures can be seen either hiding under the veil or such angles have been selected where the face could not reveal. One of the reasons for incorporating a single female figure in the majority of her paintings especially when she was not working on social-political issues in her early paintings could be the fact that her father has no son. In an interview, she said that she has no brother having only four sisters. (Stars in Her Eyes.2021). This fact may arouse an inner urgency in her to prove her female gender not less than the other one in front of her parents and even of society as well. This is one of the reasons that females in her paintings can be seen engaged in self-realization and symbolizing the idea of growth and accomplishment. Even she has also placed herself many times as a subject in her paintings as evident in (Plate 5) entitled "A Self-portrait -Beyond the Realm". This painting portrays the idea of accomplishment and piousness as standing in front of a Halo composed of gold leaf as Christians use to depict the piousness of their saints. Even Mughal Emperors loved to depict themselves as succeeding Kings standing in front of the sun often seen in Mughal miniature paintings especially females holding a flower in their hands in profile pose. Marjorie Husain while commenting on Rahat Naveed's consistent usage of Gold leaf in her paintings says that one of the reasons for this practice is Rahat Naveed's interest in Duccio de Buoninsegna paintings who belonged to the Sieneese School from 14th century and painted gold halos in his paintings. She also says that while teaching her students she went through the usage of gold leaf in Mughal and Persian Art which also embed with it some spiritual significance (Naveed Maud, 2011.p.2).



Plate No.5, Dr.Rahet Naveed Masud, A Self-portrait -Beyond the Realm, 2011,111.7 x 88 cm, Oil on canvas, in Artist's Collection Source: Naveed Maud,R.(2011). *Ishq series* [Exhibition catalog].Lahore, Pakistan: Ejaz Galleries.

Whereas in Ali Azmat's paintings, the formula of portraying a single figure is also evident. His work focused more on highlighting the issues of females living in Pakistani society. In male dominating society females face obstacles and suppressed environment and the introvert side of the female gender is evident in his paintings. Ali Azmat seems inclined towards the depiction of female figures in his paintings who seems annoyed and lost in their thoughts and grief as evident in (plate 6). A preference to execute the female as a focal point and as an important subject is evident in both Rahat Naveed's and Ali Azmat's paintings. Ali Azmat also painted his female models in the same manner as Rahat Naveed did with faces composed in such angles where it is hard to recognize the facial features of the sitter (plate 6). Ali Azmat is also the father of three daughters and this fact to some extent motivates him to highlight the female gender. Even some of his paintings he did with the collaboration of his daughter and the final results of the paintings were astonishing as evident in (plate 7).



Plate.6, Ali Azmat, *Fragile*, oil on canvas, 76x91cm. Source: <https://www.google.com.pk/search?q=ali+azmat+painting+fragile&biw=1093&bih=506&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved> (Accessed on March 24, 2023).



Plate. 7, Ali Azmat, *Untitled*, oil on canvas. Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1147396>. (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Mughees Riaz's interest in art is hereditary as his grandfather Muhammad Azad was the first poster painter of Pakistani cinema and his father had expertise in Graphic Design but Mughees Riaz has followed a realistic genre of painting. Mughees also remained a student of Khalid Iqbal whom he admires most which is one of the reasons that he got

interested in landscape painting. His paintings are comprised of vast landscapes but he also incorporates human figures, still life, and portraits in his paintings. Mughees Riaz remained very close to Ali Azmat especially when both of them were class fellows and Ali Azmat used to live in a hostel. Rahat Naveed was their instructor at the beginning and together they started to see the human figure with a new perspective in painting. (Hussain et al.2013,p.154).

In Mughees Riaz's paintings again one can see the formula of presenting a single figure but this time the gender has been replaced instead of female nude male figures can be seen reclining on the ground hiding their faces. Mughees Riaz took the help of gestures and postures as shown in (plate 8).



Plate.8. Male Nude-III painted by Mughees Riaz, oil on canvas 91.5 x 91.5 cm. Source: <https://bit.ly/3KhoCBC>. (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

To express the inner emptiness of human beings like Rahat Naveed painted figures where the viewer does not require any facial expressions to understand the true inner feelings of the sitter. Ali Azmat has also painted a few paintings with male nude figures who look more corpse-like and aged as compared to those in Mughees Riaz's paintings as evident in (Plate 9). Dr. Sadia Arshad also writes about Mughees Riaz paintings that *"His paintings evoke lonesomeness and emptiness. This theme seems a common factor among most of his contemporaries as well. The only difference is that Mughees presentations are more personal and a product of the world of his imagination."*(Arshad, 2017).



Plate. 9, Ali Azmat, *Untitled*, 2006, oil on canvas, 101.6x101.6cm. Source: <https://khamsart.com/artwork/untitled/>.

Influences in Color Palette

Mughees Riaz did a series of paintings in 2011 in which he painted nude male figures either shown seated or in reclining postures on the floor done in pure tones of red and green

color to depict the social and political turmoil that existed at that time in Pakistan as evident in Male Nude-III (plate 8). The flooring of red and green color in such indoor paintings done by Mughees Riaz reminds the viewer of color palette of those paintings done by Ali Azmat in 2006 in which Ali Azmat painted draperies in red and green color as evident in (plate 9). Ali Azmat has also incorporated red and green colors in his series of paintings titled Sirat-e-Mustaqeem (The true path) done in 2011 as evident in (plate 10) in which he has highlighted the idea of misconceiving the religion and practicing the activities which are against the teaching of our religion Islam (Sibtain, 2011). Ali Azmat has painted green fabric along with red color in this series symbolically both artists Ali Azmat and Mughees Riaz chose red and green colors to portray the political and religious upheaval that existed in Pakistan from the years 2007 to 2011, especially in Lahore in their paintings mentioned above.

There are also some similarities between the color palette of paintings done by Mughees Riaz and Dr. Rahat Naveed. The background of Mughees Riaz's painting Male Nude-III (plate 8) is painted in soft tones of peach and lilac color which he mostly uses in his outdoor landscapes to create a perspective that recalls the soft color palette of Rahat Naveed's paintings. She has also incorporated such soft tones in background of her paintings as evident in (plate 1) and sometimes in draperies and in rendering of skin as can be seen in (plate 11).



Plate.10, Ali Azmat, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 22.8x38.1cm. Source: *A Journey of Resilience and Success, 1940-2013*: College of Art and Design University of the Punjab Lahore. College of Art and Design University of the Punjab Lahore.p.155.



Plate.11, Dr. Rahat Naveed, untitled, 2015, 121x 182cm Oil, on canvas, in War Museum Lahore. Source: https://www.dawn.com/news/1175113/_print (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Metaphorical Significance of Trees and Nature

Interestingly all three artists have incorporated an element of the plant, especially a tree in their paintings. The element of the tree has significance in Rahat Naveed's paintings and is strongly connected with the life of a human being as before attaining its full form a tree undergoes several stages of development like a human. Rahat Naveed has been painting a variety of trees in her work including floral trees (Amaltas) since her early works and fruit trees such as mango trees representing the bounties of Pakistani land. Peepal and Cypress trees in her mature period work represents mysticism. Cypress trees in Dr. Rahat Naveed's paintings also remind one of the cypress trees painted by Abdur Rahman Chughtai in his book named *Muraqqa-i-Chughtai* which were the illustrations of Ghalib's poetry. Qudus Mirza while appreciating Dr. Rahat Naveed's paintings said that poetic, lyrical, and painterly quality is more prominent in her paintings and it depicts her in-depth knowledge of poetry and music of our region (Mirza, 2011). In Abdur Rahman Chughtai's paintings, female figure was juxtaposed with cypress trees in the same way as composed in Dr. Rahat Naveed's *Ishq* series in reclining postures as longing to have union with her beloved. The themes painted by Abdur Rahman Chughtai were romantic having Persian and Mughal miniature influences (Mughees, 2014) as evident in (Plate 12). The Cypress tree in Persian poetry and even in its literature signifies devotion, high-and-mighty, and prestige. Many times it suggests the highly zealous lover possessed the qualities of sophistication, intangibility, and having a green dress. In Sufism Cypress tree is often interpreted as a metaphor for an ideal man who is flawless. The slight bent at the top of this tree symbolizes the prophet's obedience to God's will. (Amir & Pervaiz, 2018, p.11).



Plate.12, Abdur Rahman Chughtai, watercolor. Source: Aamir, N. Pervaiz, A. (2018). *The Symbolic Significance of Sarv Motif in Islamic Art: An Inquiry into its Mystical Underpinnings*. *Majallah-e-Tahqiq* 2018, [http://pu.edu.pk /images/journal/uocc/pdf/11_v39_112_18.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/uocc/pdf/11_v39_112_18.pdf).

As Dr. Rahat Naveed's *Ishq* series of paintings highlight the idea of Sufism and revolves around Sufi poetry it's important to understand the perspective of Bulleh Shah who is considered the great mystic poet of Punjab. After gaining mystic realization Bulleh Shah was supposed to successfully cross a path to acquire true inner knowledge. This attainment can only be conceived by him after meeting his Murshid or Master, Inayat Shah. His urge to have a union with his Lord got completion in a true sense after he met his master Inayat Shah. *"During his time with his master Sahah Inayat Qadri, he used the feminine metaphor to voice his thoughts, and he dressed as a woman whirled like a dancing girl of the street though he was from a highly esteemed and respected background."* (Puri and Shangari as cited in Unher & Bano, 2010). By considering the metaphorical importance of the cypress tree in Sufism as an ideal man along with Bulleh Shahs' adaption of female metaphor to address the divine being discussed above it can be said that Rahat Naveed's painting *Red 1* (plate 13) illustrates the idea of mystic love between the pupil and the God metaphorically.



Plate.13, Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, *Red 1*, 2011, 68 x 144cm, Gold leaf and oil on canvas, in a private collection in Karachi. Source: Naveed Maud,R.(2011). *Ishq series* [Exhibition catalogue].Lahore, Pakistan: Ejaz Galleries.

In the same painting by Rahat Naveed Red 1(plate 13), she has also painted peepal leaf hanging from the top towards the face of female figure who is shown detached from the surrounding world. Before talking about the importance of the Peepal tree in Buddhism it is important to understand the similarities between both Sufism and Buddhism. *“Sufism could be defined as the Persian interpretation of Islam which was empowered by ancient Iranian religions as well as Buddhism and even Hinduism. Interestingly, Sufism and Buddhism are comparable. Both are practical and they talk about ways of life. Attaining truth in Buddhism is by following the path and practicing meditation which is similar to Moraghebe in Sufism. Buddhism and Sufism talk about unique personal and spiritual experiences”* (Masoumi, 2015). It is considered that after sitting under the peepal tree for several days in Bodh Gaya, India Buddha attained nirvana while busy in meditation. Rahat Naveed has painted a peepal tree with its leaves highlighted in gold leaf also reminds the idea of spirituality and the element of enlightenment associated with Buddhism.

Rahat Naveed for her fruitful trees painted in her recent work produced for Khamsa Art Gallery she says *“I have used the tree as a metaphor for life. One can observe a parallel between human existence and the fruit tree—they undergo the same sequentially.”*(A Love Letter to Life, 2022).She has painted different fruits in her paintings like pomegranates which symbolize pregnancy, dates, and pears. Often depicted females with fruits especially mangoes painted in abundance metaphorically. As in Bulleh Shah’s poetry, one can feel the ecofeminism perspective according to which the womb of a female is similar to an earth’s womb. Here the word earth has been associated with soil and fertile land. She possesses all attributes which earth possesses. Like Earth, she can produce, reproduce, and can nourish mankind (Kiran Zahid, 2021). In her painting, Awe-Struck (plate 14) artist seems quite satisfied and calm as she has accomplished what she wants from life and proved herself to society so the struggle, growth, and fruits of that hard work are visible in the metaphorical tree, and in her expressions as well.

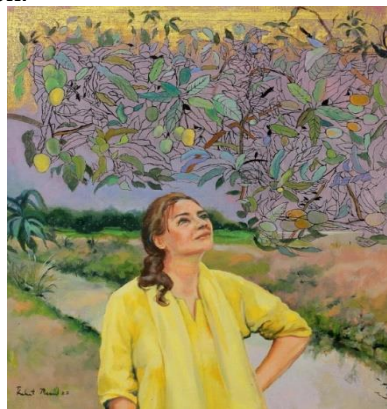


Plate.14, Dr. Rahat Naveed, *Awe-Struck*, Oil, gold leaf and screen printing on canvas, 55.88 × 66.04 cm, in a private collection. Source:<https://www.google.com.pk/search?q=ali+azmat+painting+fragile&biw=>

1093&bih= 506&tbm=isch&tbo= u&source=univ&SA=X&ved (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Ali Azmat has also been incorporating thorny rough textured plants and trees in his paintings as a metaphor for agony and suppression faced by she-males in Pakistani society. Females in most of his canvases are composed in open spaces along with a single plant of cactus to dramatize the pathos of the female gender. Cactus is considered a plant which possesses the quality to survive in the roughest conditions of weather. Instead of growing in deserts cactus plant has the ability to survive in deserts with the least water supply. As she-males use to have coarse textures of skin and masculine physical attributes but by the soul they are feminine. Once Ali Azmat said *“Recently I have been interested in plants which have aspect resembling human features eyes, nose, ears, etc. Although aware of the differences I have found strange similarities in the color and texture of their skin; the cactus is one example.”* (Azmat.2009). These huge cacti trees symbolize the traits of both sexes in his painting Moorat 10 (plate 15).



Plate. 15, Ali Azmat, Moorat 10, Oil, acrylic on canvas, 45 x 75.5cm. Source: <https://bit.ly/3KjVEkS>, (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Mughees Riaz's landscapes are painted with vast open spaces and it feels as if the voice of a person can echo in it they are so empty and full of perspective. His painted trees arouse the feeling of loneliness and look barren hardly having any foliage left on them. His work is the reflection of his inner emotions and imagination so an amalgamation of reality and imagination is obvious in his landscapes. His painted trees seem as painted in silhouettes of grays and black against a soft artificial background painted in hues of peaches and pinks giving hints of haunted souls deprived of life and joy. Mughees Riaz has painted his landscapes with trees that seem like painted twigs with pointed edges hollow from the inside. He painted them as deprived of life not because he used to look at nature in this way however, he painted trees as metaphors for human existence which constantly needs care and nourishment for healthy growth evident in (plate 16). His painted trees seem as the trees of Safeda in English called Eucalyptus trees are one of the trees which can be seen growing in the areas of Punjab. The eucalyptus tree is a tree that consumes a lot of water from the ground and makes the land or soil deprived of nutrients and also harms the surrounding crops. In some of his paintings, he metaphorically painted himself as land or soil often contrasting with pitchers.



Plate No.16, Mughees Riaz, untitled, Oil, acrylic on canvas. Source: <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/art-review-capes-of-pakistan-at-gallery-6-islamabad/ODE2> Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Compositional similarities

In some places, one can see very intense similarities in the painting compositions of these three artists. Such similarities in composition especially pyramid like compositions are evident in their works done at different periods of their career. A very sad incident happened at Army public school in Peshawar. In this context, Artist Association of Punjab called Artists to contribute to an exhibition titled “Massacre of Innocents” at Alhambra Art Gallery Lahore. For this purpose, Rahat Naveed participated where she painted her self-portrait as Jesus Marry holding a dead body of a child which reminds the master sculpture piece of Michelangelo Pieta and golden pyramidal composition and was painted in 2015 (Plate 11). The same utilization of pyramidal composition is evident in one of Mughees Riaz’s paintings done under the title Kirdar [In My – Land Space] at Canvas Gallery in 2021 where various aspects of society related to male and female genders are highlighted. (Mirza, 2021). The same supremacy has not been identified here in the portrait of the female who is painted here as a mother in painting *Pyaar Kahani* (plate 17) but here in black color which creates ambiguity whereas in Rahat Naveed’s Painting white drapery makes her character look more spiritual, pious, and majestic.



Plate. 17, Mughees Riaz, *Pyaar Kahani*, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 71 cm. Source: <https://bit.ly/3KiUkyD> (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Whereas in Ali Azmat Moorat series such similar composition is identifiable creating a pyramid in which a male is shown holding a child (plate 18) painted in 2009. Although all three of these artists use to comment on social and political situations amalgamated with their perceptions but unconsciously hints of inspiration can be felt in their work. One of the reasons for the occurrence of such hints is that they were simultaneously producing their paintings under the same roof of Punjab University as colleagues so it was natural to get inspiration from the contemporary colleagues even unconsciously.



Plate. 18, Ali Azmat, Moorat, Oil, acrylic on canvas. Source: <https://www.artrabbit.com/events/ali-azmat-moorat>, (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Fauna

Mughees Riaz in his early phase paintings depicted buffaloes, dogs, and crows sitting in isolation as part of the landscape at the bank of River Ravi. With the passage of time, he started contrasting fauna with human figures and developed a metaphorical linkage between them. The practice of character assassination is common in Pakistani society, people are so judgmental. Some animals like cats and dogs are admired by people and they love to pet them and consider them as of high species whereas such stray cats and dogs can also be seen wandering around in



Plate.19, Mughees Riaz, *Khat-o-kitabat* , 2021, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 20 cm. Source: <https://myartguide.com/pk/artists/mughees-riaz/14>, (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Streets and considered harmful to people. Mughees Riaz relates crows with men and buffaloes with women metaphorically. Qadus Mirza while commenting on the element of fauna in Mughees Riaz paintings painted in 2021 said that *“Buffalos are domesticated, passive, dependent and useful, while crows are free-flying, alert, noisy and active. The placement of buffalos with women and crows with men is not accidental therefore. It describes the genders in terms of characteristics attributed to animals represented in the paintings”* (Mirza, 2021) as evident in his painting *Khat-o-kitabat* (Plate 19).

In Rahat Naveed’s paintings, she composed various birds like doves, peacocks, and parrots in her paintings as a metaphor for peace and a free and pious soul often seen in her *Ishaq* series in which she explored the idea of spirituality and Sufism. At most of the shrines, people use to feed birds as an act of kindness that can make their God happy in return and receive his blessings as evident in her painting *Introspection 1* (plate 20) painted in 2010. Qudus Mirza while explaining the usage of such symbols in Rahat Naveed’s paintings said *that like a saint, an artist also spends his/her life searching for the meaning of reality. Birds, flowers, keys, lock, and cage all can be retraced as potent symbols for a human being bound in a world that is both beautiful as well as unbearable.”* (Naveed Maud, 2011).



Plate .20, Dr.Rahet Naveed Masud, *Introspection 1*, 2010, 147 x 114cm, oil, gold leaf block printing on acrylic gesso on canvas, in Uzma Murad’s Collection. Source: Naveed Maud,R.(2011). *Ishaq series* [Exhibition catalogue]. Lahore, Pakistan: Ejaz Galleries.

Ali Azmat has painted huge-sized portraits of females and girls in an exhibition titled “Larger than Life” in charcoal. Here he has juxtaposed his models with pet animals like cats. Pet animals share a special bond with their owner and in these works, he has tried to record the spiritual connection which he feels while painting his Larger than life size models as shown in (plate 21). In Ali Azmat’s paintings, Fauna can be seen painted as cats, especially for this series of works where it has the value of an innocent pet who shares the relationship of love, and cuddling and acts as a healing process for humans as well.



Plate. 21, Ali Azmat, Untitled, 2009, charcoal Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/434061-faces-speak-unspoken-words>, (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

Gold leaf a strong symbol

Another visual element which has been thoughtfully utilized in artists compositions is the use of Gold leaf especially in Rahat Naveed’s paintings she used it in her early paintings as well to glorify the character of females in her paintings and to induce them with an element of hope and prosperity. In her *Ishq* series, where she explored the idea of the true love of an individual with the divine being is very precious. Gold leaf in her work symbolizes the permanence of true love. Most of her paintings are embedded with abstract shapes like circles and cubes surrounded by circles of bright colors symbolizing the spiritual pilgrimage of Ka’abah by the devotees. (Lloyd. 2011) Gold leaf here is associated as a medium linked with light, knowledge, and transformation. The shimmer of colors and its glaze appearing repeatedly in her paintings suggests clarity of soul and radiation of pure and divine love. As evident in her paintings (plate 22).



Plate. 22 Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, Square, 2008, 58.1x63cm, Gold leaf and pastels on handmade paper, in artist’s collection. Source: Naveed Maud,R.(2011). *Ishq series* [Exhibition catalogue]. Lahore, Pakistan: Ejaz Galleries.

Ali Azmat has also inserted gold leaf in his specific body of work in which all of his compositions were done in monochromatic tones of gray and black. The positioning of elements with gold leaf is very interesting. In his painting *Dialogue* (plate 23) a large blossomed flower is painted hanging on top of the head of a model which glorifies her gender and her position in society as well. Another painting of him with which he participated in 30th Annual Exhibition of Art conducted by the Artist Association of Punjab in 2016 where a reclining female is painted in a sleeping posture her head over a pillow on which floral patterns are decorated with gold leaf. Again it's a monochromatic painting in black and gray and it suggests if one is determined to do hard work and struggle one can fulfill her dreams and make her place in the world (plate 24).



Plate. 23, Ali Azmat, *Dialogue*, Compressed charcoal and graphite with gold leaf. Source: <https://artciti.com/Ali-Azmat-Figurative-Painting-AC-AZM-004>, (Accessed on March 24, 2023).



Plate. 24, Ali Azmat, *Untitled*, Compressed charcoal and graphite and gold leaf. Source: Artist Association of Punjab 4 Catalogue, 30th Annual Exhibition of Art 2016, 14th National show, 2016.

Plate 25 untitled is a painting of Mughees Riaz from the exhibition *Kirdar* (in my Land space) which was exhibited in the canvas Art gallery in 2021. In this painting, the artist has used a 24k gold leaf in the background of a female figure painted in black drapery. According to artists in our society, people use to judge the character of a person especially of a female according to her dress if she is covering her head and body with cloth properly it means she is very religious and pious. If her head is uncovered and her body is easily visible it means that she is very liberal and unable to meet the moral standards set by the society. By placing human figures in black draperies and long beard artist comments on this bogus standard of character assassination. The juxtaposition of black and gold leaf is conceptual here as gold leaf symbolizes a halo of positivity and piety while the black cloth looks alarming as hiding the actual reality of life and absorbing the dark secrets of life. This is the first time that Mughees Riaz has incorporated gold leaf in his work so conceptually and beautifully as one of his colleagues Ali Azmat has used the combination of Black color. (M. Riaz, personal communication, April 04, 2023).



Plate. 25, Mughees Riaz, Untitled, 2021, 24k gold and Oil on Canvas, 60.9 cm. Artist's collection. Source: Photo of painting shared by artist. (Accessed on March 24, 2023).

There are some other paintings done by these three artists Dr. Rahat Naveed, Ali Azmat, and Mughees Riaz at different periods which provides the viewer with hints of similarities in the choice of colors and subject matter. Self-Love is the title of the painting done by Dr. Rahat Naveed in the year 2015 (plate 26). A specific color scheme has been followed here only two colors black and gold dominate the whole composition which are also the colors of Ghilaf Kaaba as evident in the background. Although the color palette used here by the artist is far different from her typical one the idea of exploring identity and spirituality along with the fascination with the latest gadgets is typical of her genre. Dialogue is another painting done by Ali Azmat in the year 2021, again the two colors black and golden dominate the painting (plate 27).



Plate. 26, Dr. Rahat Naveed, Self-Love, 2015, oil on canvas, 60.9 x60.9 cm, o art space Gallery Collection, Source: <https://oartspace.com/product/rahat-naveed-masood-self-love/> (Accessed on April 24, 2023).



Plate. 27, Ali Azmat, Dialogue, 2021, Acrylic and Gold leaf on canvas, 21 x 29.7 cm, Gallery Collection, <https://oartspace.com/product/ali-azmat-dialogue-3/> (Accessed on April 24, 2023).

Conclusion

By analyzing the paintings of these three artists Dr. Rahat Naveed, Ali Azmat, and Mughees Riaz it is concluded that they are following a certain genre of painting which have hints of similarities in the usage of certain visual elements. They are realistically rendering their visual elements. Metaphorical depiction of various elements of nature is evident in their work either they are colors of palette, trees, birds, animals, flowers, fruits, and gold leaf. Hints of similarities in the compositional settings are obvious. By critically evaluating their paintings done at different time periods it can be said that all three artists while serving the same Art institute in Punjab University and also parallelly produced their paintings and have developed a certain genre of painting which has astonishing similarities. Their work shares an essence of a specific genre comprising various elements discussed in detail in this article. Following a similar genre of painting somehow helped these three artists in facilitation to polish each other's painting style. Although the three of them have individual voices of their own and individual sight to view things but a similar symphony can be traced in their genre of painting.

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