

Description of the Feudal system in Pakistani Urdu short story

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ABSTRACT

In Pakistani Urdu short story, the feudal system has consistently remained a subject of discussion as a significant social, economic, and political issue. Short story writers have realistically portrayed the various facets of this system and the resulting class, societal, and human issues. In a feudal society, land is not merely a source of economic resources; it becomes the primary vehicle for power, social status, and political influence. By maintaining a firm grip on land, wealth, and political power, the feudal class seeks to subjugate weaker and marginalized groups, particularly peasants and laborers—to its own interests, thereby deepening the class divide within society. In Pakistani Urdu short fiction, the feudal mindset is not limited to economic exploitation and land ownership; it also profoundly affects human relationships, social values, individual freedom, self-respect, and social justice. To maintain its dominance, the powerful class often employs political influence, social pressure, traditional customs, and various forms of coercion, whereas the weaker class—hampered by economic dependency, deprivation, and fear, lacks the capacity for effective resistance. Through a blend of realism and techniques such as symbolism, metaphor, satire, allegory, and characterization, writers have highlighted the internal structure of the feudal system, its class-based mentality, and its impact on human lives and society. In these stories, peasants and laborers are not merely passive victims. they represent a class that, despite enduring constant exploitation, injustice, and deprivation, aspires to secure its fundamental rights and a better life. Thus, the narrative of the feudal system in Pakistani Urdu short stories does not merely reflect an economic or political structure; rather, it illuminates the dynamics of power and powerlessness, ruler and ruled, and the wealthy and the poor. Overall, these stories play a significant literary role in awakening social consciousness against feudal exploitation, highlighting class-based injustices, and underscoring the need for human freedom, equality, self-respect, and a just social order.

Keywords:-Pakistani Urdu short story, Feudal system, Social, Economic, Political, Symbolism, Metaphor, Satire, Allegory, Characterization, economic dependency, deprivation, Fear, Class-based mentality, Stories, Peasants Laborers, Class-based injustices, Human freedom, Equality, Self-respect, Social order.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the existence of a democratic system in Pakistan, the roots of the feudal system remain deep and strong, often causing democracy to appear subservient to feudal interests. This system dates back to the British era, when certain land grants (*jagirs*) were awarded in exchange for political loyalty—legacies that have persisted within the subsequent social and political structures. The feudal class safeguards its interests by maintaining a firm grip on land, politics, and local authority, while peasants and tenant farmers remain mired in economic and social deprivation. A key aspect of feudal dominance is keeping the masses alienated from education and unaware of their rights; obstructing the establishment of educational institutions in rural areas and monopolizing public amenities are prime examples of this control. Thus, the feudal system not only perpetuates class disparity but also impedes democratic values, public consciousness, and social progress.

Two primary forms of the feudal system have prevailed in Pakistan. In the first, the landowner leases the land on a contract basis, with the farmer bearing all costs for seeds, fertilizer, irrigation, and other agricultural inputs, while the landowner merely collects the lease fee. In the second form, the feudal lord shares in the produce while also extracting various services from the peasants and tenants; meanwhile, some large landowners employ laborers to cultivate the land using modern agricultural methods. Under this system, the feudal lord wields extraordinary political, social, and economic power within rural society, and local disputes are frequently resolved according to

his will. In contrast, peasants and tenant farmers remain vulnerable to abject poverty, eviction, economic exploitation, and a lack of security. Since a large share of the produce goes to the feudal lord, these individuals remain deprived of even basic necessities, housing, and education. In some instances, even a minor disagreement or act of resistance can lead to their eviction from the land or imprisonment. Thus, the feudal system emerges as a stark manifestation of power imbalance, class exploitation, and human deprivation.

Within the feudal system, there exists a class known as "Kami"—situated even lower than the tenant farmers—which performs menial tasks on the feudal lords' lands and endures severe economic and social exploitation. Due to the dominance of feudal power, this class is denied its basic rights and the preservation of its dignity, while the local administration and influential groups often operate under the sway of the feudal lord. Even after the creation of Pakistan, feudal influence persisted within the political and social structures of many regions. The feudal class safeguarded its interests in political power and legislation, thereby maintaining its hold over land, politics, and the administration. While impoverished farmers and vulnerable groups grappled with land disputes, economic deprivation, unemployment, and legal hurdles, influential landowners continued to protect their own interests through political and administrative connections. Consequently, the feudal system not only perpetuated class disparities but also obstructed the path toward social justice, economic equality, and public rights.

The nature of the feudal system in Pakistan manifests itself in various forms across different regions. In Punjab, traditional feudal influence has relatively declined due to industrial development, urban expansion, and the reduction of agricultural land; conversely, the sway of large landowners and *Waderas* remains significant in certain rural areas of Sindh. To maintain their grip on economic resources and land, some feudal lords curtail the economic self-sufficiency of farmers and sharecroppers, thereby ensuring their continued dependence. In feudal society, the distribution of property and family interests also frequently impinges upon women's rights—an extreme manifestation of which is the adoption of peculiar marriage-related customs designed to deprive girls of their inheritance. Thus, the feudal system is not confined merely to land ownership but extends its impact to economic, social, and familial structures, as Dr. Mubarak Ali observes.

"Sindh mein larkiyon ki shaadi Quran se kar di jati hai. Yeh rasm bare jagirdar gharanon mein hai. Is ka maqsad to yeh hai ke shaadi karke kisi ghair khandan ke shakhs ko apne mein dakhil nahin kiya jata. Doosre khandan ki larki kisi aur mard ki hakimiyat mein nahin jati. Aur teesre, jaidad ka hisseदार nahin hota. Kuch jagirdar khandanon mein larkiyon ki shaadi hi nahin ki jati aur paidaish se maut tak un ki zindagi haveli mein guzarti hai."¹

Within the feudal system, there exists a class known as the "Kami"—situated even lower than tenant farmers—which performs menial tasks on the feudal lords' lands and endures severe economic and social exploitation. Due to the overwhelming power of the feudal lords, this class is deprived of basic rights and the preservation of its dignity, while the local administration and influential groups often operate under the lord's sway. Even after the creation of Pakistan, feudal influence persisted within the political and social structures of many regions. The feudal class safeguarded its interests in the realms of political power and legislation, thereby maintaining its dominance over land, politics, and the administration. While impoverished farmers and vulnerable groups grappled with land disputes, economic deprivation, unemployment, and legal hurdles, influential landowners continued to protect their own interests through political and administrative connections. Thus, the feudal system not only perpetuated class disparities but also obstructed the path toward social justice, economic equality, and public rights.

Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi has vividly portrayed Punjab's rural society and the feudal system in his short stories. In one such story, a destitute young cobbler crafts a pair of shoes for a feudal lord, Raja. He dares to ask the Raja for those beautiful shoes for his own wedding, but the Raja flies into a rage at this modest request. His attitude offers a stark illustration of the arrogance, contempt, and dominance the feudal class exercises over the poor.

"Yeh jo ta aik din ke liye mil jaye to naak reh jaye mere ghar ki."²

Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi's short story "Meri Tauba" (My Vow) reflects the helplessness and exploitation of the impoverished class within a feudal society. The story's protagonist is a hardworking yet ailing young man who serves as the sole support for his elderly parents. Instead of showing empathy for his illness and dire circumstances, the feudal lord prioritizes his own convenience and the grain. The young man is sent to sell the grain in biting cold, and ultimately, only his dead body returns. This incident highlights the callousness of the feudal system, class disparity, and the lack of regard for the poor. Here is an excerpt.

"Malik ji naak par roomal phailate aik taraf ho kar bole. Mar gaya."³

In this short story, observe also the destitution of these laborers and their compulsion to pay the land rent.

"Malik ji ke aage boorhe ne haath jore ke balisht bhar zameen par ugta to khaak nahin lagata, kahan se ada karoon ga. Lekin unhon ne yahi rat lagaye rakhi ke sahib bahadur ke samne pesh kar doon ga. Woh hawalaat mein band karke nikal lein ge paise teri gari hui tijori se."⁴

Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi's short story "Chori" (The Theft) highlights the helplessness and humiliation faced by the poor within a feudal society. The story's protagonist is an impoverished young man who is falsely accused of stealing a wallet. Despite his innocence, he is denied justice; he looks to the village chieftain for help, only to be

met with contempt. Through this incident, the story exposes the excesses of the powerful class, class disparities, and the devaluation of the poor inherent in the feudal system.

"Haraamzaade, tujhe sharam nahin aati. Ghar aane walon ki yun khatir ki jati hai? Saare gaon ki naak katwa kar rakh di."5

Up until now, the confrontation was limited to words and verbal abuse; what followed was the onset of violence.

"Ab us ki peeth par Sardar ka patla chabuk sharaap sharaap par raha tha. Nikaal warna teri mushkein kas kar alsee ka kar dhun doon ga, mirchon ka."6

"Har jumle par us ki peeth par aik aisa chabuk parta tha ke us ki jild sar se paon tak tanboore ke taaron ki tarah laraz jati thi."7

Amidst this violence, a man comes running and tells the old man that he had handed over his wallet to him for safekeeping, fearing it might go missing; this is how Mangu finds relief. Another short story, "Kani Aankh" (The Blind Eye), represents feudal society. It portrays a feudal lord who has lost one eye, yet—driven by his feudal status—he reframes the incident as a tale of bravery and valor. Through this character, Qasmi satirically highlights the arrogance, ostentation, and feigned courage of the feudal class.

"Chaudhry naya naya jawan ho raha tha. Neeli pagri par abraq chhirak kar jab turra jamata tha to sar par aur latthay ke tehsband ko khar kharata, zareen jootay ko chah chahata, jab galiyon mein phoon phoon karta guzarta to log jal jate, par kya karte! Chaudhry tha, koi ulti baat kar dete to doosre din police aa dhamakti."8

This excerpt highlights the oppression and tyranny of the feudal system and the helplessness of the peasants. Ahmad Ali buys a gold necklace worth 250 rupees for his daughter, but the *Zaildar*—declaring it fake in front of everyone—shatters his happiness and wounds his dignity. This incident reveals the feudal lord's demeaning and cruel mindset. However, the relentless oppression begins to awaken a sense of resistance within Ahmad Ali, prompting him to consider a reaction against the feudal lord. Another excerpt is as follows.

"Main samjha yeh paaye nahin balki palang ke har kone ke neeche aik sakin khariya hai aur Khuda Bakhsh! Main ne yeh bhi socha ke agar yeh chaaron sakin palang ke chaaron goshon se nikal jaayen to palang zameen par aa rahe".9

In the short story, the feudal lord speaks with great pride of his pet falcon, "Lawrence of Tehsil Basyar." Just as the feudal lord oppresses the weak, his falcon preys upon small, innocent birds. This behavior of the falcon becomes a symbol of the feudal lord's cruel and tyrannical mindset, for whom hunting is merely a source of amusement and pleasure.

"Mir Lawrence Lali ko dekhta hai to pagal ho jata hai. Lali ka gosht mere Lawrence of Thalibia ke liye whisky hai.... Us ke khane ka qareena dekho, haddi par se gosht kaise utarta hai. Insaan ko bhi yeh saleeqa naseeb nahin."10

The feudal lord's friend loses his patience. He protests in a bitter tone.

"Laanat! Main ne kaha tumhari zehniyat to aadam khoron ki si hai. Magar Khuda Bakhsh hansta raha aur meri taraf yun dekhta raha jaise main beemar hoon aur woh meri dil aazari nahin karna chahta."11

Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi's short story "Sheesh Mahal" highlights the helplessness and humiliation of the poor within a feudal society. Allah Bakhsh—whom the feudal lord addresses simply as "Bashko"—is stripped of his identity and dignity. The landlord oscillates between subjecting him to scorn and reproach and offering assistance through loans; this dual behavior reflects a strategy of maintaining influence over the poor by keeping them in a state of dependency. In such moments, his class-based prejudice manifests as verbal outbursts born of irritation.

"Mochi ho kar aulaad ke naam Lahoreeyon ke se rakhte ho. Mochi ho kar reshama pehente ho. Ab mochi ho kar pakka makaan banwate ho. Main poochta hoon, ilaqe bhar mein kisi bare se bare mochi ka bhi makaan pakka hai?"12

Shaukat Siddiqui has highlighted the feudal system, class exploitation and deprivation of the common man in his stories. The story "Chand Ka Dag" is the story of Mardan Shah, a cruel and opulent feudal lord, who exploits the peasants and weak people on the basis of his power and wealth and also oppresses their women. However, Mardan Shah is eventually wounded by the resistance of a woman's husband and thereafter gives up his cruel ways. The myth highlights resistance to feudal oppression and the end of arrogance of power.

"Chaar qawi-o-haikal aur hoshiyar karindon ko muntakhib kiya aur un ke humrah jeep mein sawar ho gaya. Sab ke paas mukhtalif qisam ka aslaah tha. Woh shikariyon ki tarah mustaid aur chokas nazar aa rahe thay. Makani khud jeep chala raha tha. Us ke zano par bhari hui rifle rakhi thi."13

The feudal lord's henchmen are searching for a woman. To this end, they search the entire settlement.

"Mardan Shah ke naukron chakron ne kothe ke aik aik ghar ki talashi li. Jin logon se Allah Abhaya ka mail jol tha, unhein daraya dhamkaya gaya, jootay lagaye gaye, haath paon baandh kar ulta latkaya gaya."14

Mardan Shah has his own private prison, where he confines his offenders and punishes them as he sees fit.

"Mardan Shah ne poori rodaad suni aur Noori ki taraf ishara karte hue bola, 'Ise kothe ke tekhane mein le jao aur Allah Abhaya ki laash ko thikane laga do'"15

Mardan Shah's *haveli* serves as a veritable prison for women, while also housing a separate detention area for men deemed adversaries or criminals. The narrative vividly depicts the manner in which Mardan Shah subjects the women within the *haveli* to abuse.

"Us ne baen haath se Noori ke baal pakre aur zor se is tarah jhatka diya ke us ka chehra saamne aa gaya. Woh zakhmi parinday ki tarah dono karindon ki girافت mein pharpharane lagi. Mardan Shah ne lohe ka dehakta hua surkh surkh tukra Noori ke rukhsaar par zor se jama diya... Is dafa Mardan Shah ne Noori ko is tarah daagha ke lohe ka dehakta hua surkh surkh tukra us ke naram uchhle lene ke bachon ki jam gaya."16

Girls or women subjected to such violence were left helpless in society. These women had neither the right to voice their grievances nor any avenue for redress, because all such institutions serve to protect the feudal lords. Here is another excerpt.

"Aisi daaghi larki na ab haveli mein reh sakti hai, na kothe mein use koi panaah de sakta hai. Sab Mardan Ali Shah ke atab se darte hain. Na woh ehtijaj kar sakti hai aur na thane mein ja kar faryaad kar sakti hai. Thanedaar ka Mardan Shah se yaarana hai. Woh us ke saath baith kar sharaab peeta hai, shikaar khelta hai. Zaroorat parne par dono aik doosre ki har tarah se madad karte hain."17

Shaukat Siddiqui's fiction "Khan Bahadur" highlights the feudal mentality and the flattery of the feudal class before the British rulers. Khan Bahadur wants to maintain the sovereignty and terror in his country, but he flatters the British capitalists to achieve their interests. His family's past loyalties and concessions from the British show the self-interested character of the feudal class. Thus the myth depicts feudalism, servile mentality and abdication of principles for power.

"Kuch dair baitha raha. Glass utha kar scotch ke ghont bharta raha. Phir use khud hi apni ghalti ka ehssas hua. Us ne walid-e-mohtaram se poochha, 'Wal Abdullah, hum ne kitni thokrein tum ko maarein?' Walid-e-mohtaram ne haath jor kar arz kiya, 'Huzoor! Chhe thokrein to mujhe yaad hain, aage aap ko khabar hogi.' Us ne hans kar kaha, 'Jao, tum ko chhe gaon bakhsh diye.'18

Khan Bahadur's collection of antiquities also includes a shoe, regarding which he says.

"Mere walid ne aik baar phir jhuk kar commissioner ka aadaab kiya. Jaan-o-maal ki salaamati ki duaen dein aur haath baandh kar us ke rubaroo moaddab kharay rahe. Commissioner ne poochha, 'Dil Abdullah! Ab tum kya chahte ho?' Unhon ne commissioner ki baat sun kar nihayat adab se kaha, 'Sarkar!'"19

'Yeh joota mujhe inayat kar diya jaye to bari nawazish hogi. Main ise qeemti yaadgaar ke taur par apne paas rakhna chahta hoon.' Un ki yeh baat sun kar us ne zor ka qahqaha lagaya. Is qadar khush hua ke do gaon jaagir mein aur barha diye. Yeh joota paon se utaara aur walid marhoom ko de diya."20

In his short stories, Ghulam-us-Saqlain Naqvi portrays various facets of rural Punjabi society and the feudal system. The story "Shera Numberdar" revolves around Shera, a mid-level landowner who—despite his feudal status—is devoid of the arrogance typically associated with the class and instead champions love and brotherhood. His family members, too, possess admirable human qualities. Although the sudden death of his son deals him a severe blow, he gradually overcomes his grief and returns to life. The story presents a gentle, humane character set against a feudal backdrop.

"Baba Sher jawani mein bare kale thale ka ghabru tha. Ab bhi us ki chaal mein bankpan tha aur aankhon mein chamak. Chunke umar ke saath saath waqar ka bhi izafa ho gaya tha, is liye ab woh akar kar na chalta. Sar par bara sa paggar, latthay ka dhula hua safed teiband, sardiyon mein khes ki bukkal, garmiyon mein kandhe par malmal ka saafah, chehre par itminan ki jhalak. Guzri hui zindagi ki itminaniyat aik mustaqil muskurahat ban kar ang ang mein rach gayi thi." 20

"Baba Sher mutmain qalb lekar gaon mein phirta. Daulat aur izzat ki ziyadti ne us ke pindaar ko angekht na kiya tha. Woh pehle se bhi zyada aajiz aur narm dil ho gaya tha. Doosron ki museebat par sab se pehle hamdardi ka tohfa lekar pohanchta."21

The short story "Masi Hajjan aur Chuha Chor" focuses on the lives and moral attitudes of thieves—significant figures in rural society. It reveals various facets of the characters and moral outlooks of these thieves; one character upholds moral values and principles, while the other deviates from them. Thus, the story highlights the nature, conduct, and social attitudes of criminals.

"Chaudhry Kareem ki mantiq foran meri samajh mein aa gayi. Woh chor zaroor tha lekin rakh-rakhao ka qail, waz'a-daar qisam ka, turra ooncha rakh kar chori karne wala chor.... Sirf use loot'ta jo loote jaane ke qabil ho. Phir Sunni bhi tha. Chuha chor do chaar kheton ka malik tha. Apne chhote se mil kar aik mushtarka kunwein par zaraat bhi ki, lekin Chaudhry kabhi na ban paaya, din ko na raat ko." 22

Ghulam-us-Saqlain Naqvi's short story "Teekha Mor" (The Sharp Turn) reflects social relationships shaped by economic inequality and class distinctions. In the story, the Chaudhry falls in love with Samoon's sister. Upon learning of this, Samoon's reaction stems not from concerns regarding traditional family honor, but rather from anxiety over the disparity in social status; he worries about how such a union could be possible given the significant gap between the Chaudhry's social standing and his own family's. However, when the elder Chaudhry respectfully proposes the match, Samoon is unable to refuse, and the two are subsequently married.

"Phir aik din Karam Deen ka baap aaya aur Samoon se Karam Deen ke liye Rani ka rishta maanga. Samoon gang ho kar reh gaya. Woh dair tak koi baat na kar saka. 'Nahin Chaudhry ji! Mera aur aap ka koi jor nahin. Main saari biradari se dushmani mol le kar tere paas aaya hoon. Samoon, Karmo mera ikhota beta hai, par tera jigri dost bhi to hoon. Tu ne mujhe khaali haath lauta diya to biradari mujhe taane degi aur Karmo jeete ji mar jayega.'" 23

The dialogue between the two characters highlights the social attitudes and various facets of the feudal system prevalent in that era. During this period, there were feudal lords who would adopt a humble and deferential attitude when seeking marriage alliances for their sons with families of lower social standing, regarding the matter as crucial to their son's life. Conversely, other feudal lords—relying on their power and influence—would abduct daughters from impoverished families, imprison them in their mansions, and, after satisfying their lust, subject them to violence before abandoning them to a helpless fate. No one dared to raise a voice against such atrocities. This situation illustrates the unequal exercise of power, class disparity, and the helplessness of the weaker sections within feudal society. The short story "Dachi Walia Mor Maharan Ve" reflects rural life and the feudal social order. It centers on the love story of Mariyan, a farmer's daughter, and Sajawal, the son of a small landowner. The two fall in love and elope from the village; both families turn the incident into a matter of traditional honor and ego. Eventually, Mariyan and Sajawal seek refuge with a prominent feudal lord in Mirpur, where an attempt is made to resolve the dispute in the presence of both families and the villagers. The decision is entrusted to the landlord of Noorpur, who ascertains the wishes of each individual separately. When both express their firm resolve to spend their lives together—come what may—the landlord realizes that his traditional feudal authority has failed in the face of their unwavering determination.

"Main pyaar ke vanjaare mein Sajawal se bachi nahin rahoon gi. Koi kisi pyaar ke chhallon se laut nahin aayi." 24

The landlord had not expected such a reply from Mariyan. Upon hearing her words, the fire of revenge began to burn within him—a man who was both a tyrant and, outwardly, a proud individual.

"Aik lamhe ke liye zameendar ke asaab jhanjhana uthay. Us ki mulaim paishani par shikanain parin aur paseena aa gaya. Yeh us ki zindagi ka pehla lamha tha jab us ne shikast khayi thi. Aik larki hai. Us ne Mariyan par chilchilati hui nigaah daali aur us ne dekha ke yeh larki woh to nahin jisay us ne aik lamha pehle dekha tha. Yeh to pyaar ke thallon ki si thi. Aik shehzadi jo patharon ko dil de baithi thi. Mehlon mein rehne wali bebak shehzadi, jis ke chehre par alagz, ghuroor aur aankhon mein gustakh iraday thay ke chatanon ko paash paash kar daalein. Aur zameendar ke chehre par aik jazba ubhra: 'Main khud in nigaahon ko zair karoon ga.'" 25

When the landlord assessed the situation, neither of the two villagers was willing to back down. So, upholding his tradition, the landlord spoke.

"Main ne aaj tak apni panaah mein aaye hue logon ko wapas nahin kiya. Main Mariyan ko lauta nahin sakta. Shahwar Puriyo! Tum khush ho jao, main ne tumhari Mariyan ko apne mahal ke qabil samajh liya hai. Aur Jhol Kamal ke logo! Tum mutmain raho, ab tumhein Shehdi Pur wale aankh utha kar nahin dekh sakte. Main ne tumhein un ke khooni inteqam se bacha liya hai. Zameendar ne qahqaha lagaya aur us ka tabqiya bijli ki chamak tha jo majme ko chaat kar rakh gaya." 26

Although the landlord provides shelter to Marian and Sajawal, his cruel and exploitative character is soon revealed. Seeing Marian in his mansion, he abuses his power and sexually exploits her by imprisoning her in the mansion. On the other hand, Sajawal is helpless to save his beloved from this cruelty and keeps hitting his head against the stone walls. This episode highlights the brutality of the feudal system, the helplessness of women and the abuse of power.

"Shah War Pur ki Sassi thalon ke aik "tibay" par nangay paon awara sar gardaan thi. Us ke paon mein chhalay thay. Baal bikhre hue thay. Jhok Kamal ko Punnu zameendar ke mehman khane mein akela tha. Lekin Mariyan zameendar ke mahal ki aik haibat-naak deewar us ke seenay par aa pari. Use apna dam ghutta hua mehsoos hua." 27

The short story "Andha Kunwan" presents rural life, the lust of the feudal lord, and the helplessness and deprivation of women within a feudal society through a symbolic lens. By linking the legends of ancient kings to the modern-day feudal system, the author seeks to illustrate how the past persists in the present and how ancient tales take on new layers of meaning amidst changing circumstances. Employing a philosophical perspective, Ghulam-us-Saqlain Naqvi interprets the "blind well" as a symbol of the human inner self—a repository where one's desires, aspirations, and unfulfilled longings lie buried. Yet, despite all human effort, this internal well never solidifies into stone; a vibrant world of desires and emotions continues to dwell within it, keeping the individual in a state of perpetual restlessness.

"- Woh kunwaan har jagah mojud hai. Har insaan ke andar bhi hai, kisi kisi ko nazar aata hai. Us ke ird gird koi na koi shehzada mandlata hua nazar aata hai, lekin kunwein ka bhaari pathar us se uth nahin sakta. Woh shehzadi ki talaash mein aata hai aur shehzadi us ko pukarti rehti hai aur pathar se sar ko patakhta rehta hai aur jin bhoot qahqahay laga kar hanstay rehte hain." 28

The short stories of Mansha Yad also reflect the feudal system and the oppressive attitudes fostered by it. He has portrayed the exploitative nature of the feudal lord and his acts of tyranny in various ways; in some stories, the

feudal lord is the central character, while in others, his presence serves to highlight social oppression and class-based injustice. His short story "Kachi Pakki Qabrein" (Unfinished and Finished Graves) also addresses the issue of class distinction, highlighting social inequality through the allocation of graves. The story's protagonist is a gravedigger named Kodu, who is keenly aware that in a feudal society, there are stark disparities in the living conditions, social status, and lifestyles of the living. Tragically, this class divide does not end with death; the distinction between the rich and the poor persists even within the graveyard. Thus, by presenting the allocation of graves in a symbolic manner, Mansha Yad has highlighted the profound class inequalities inherent in feudal society.

"Baray logon ki qabrein pukhta aur bari hain. Ghareeb aur nadar logon ki qabrein kachchi aur be-nishan hain. Zameendaron aur chaudhriyon ki pukhta qabrein un ki haveliyon ki tarah achhi aur buland jagahon par hain... Mazaraon aur kamiyon ki qabrein nam-aalood aur nasheebi jagahon par hain." 29

Mansha Yad's short story "Khwab dar Khwab" (Dream within a Dream) also addresses the feudal system and its exploitative nature. In the story, the feudal lord diverts the *Maulvi*—who is appointed to oversee religious affairs—away from his primary role and engages him in other tasks. The underlying objective of this move is to keep the masses alienated from knowledge and awareness, thereby stifling any potential for consciousness or awakening; this ensures that people remain lost in the darkness of ignorance, unable to raise their voices against feudal domination. Thus, the author highlights the feudal lord's strategy of maintaining his social and class supremacy by obstructing the intellectual and conscious development of the common people.

"Naujawan Maulvi Falak Sher haal hi mein dars-gah se farigh-ut-tehsil ho kar aaya hai. Us ka irada bhatke hue logon ko sirat-e-mustaqeem par lana tha, lekin Baray Malik Sahib ne us ki duty Sohna Wazini ka qissa sunane par laga di hai." 30

Mansha Yad's short story "Mai Fut" also reflects the abuse of power, coercion, and violence prevalent in a feudal society. The protagonist brings his educated wife to visit the village and arranges the return journey with the *tongawala* (carriage driver), Datta, a day in advance. However, Datta returns that night to inform them that Chaudhry Sahib has decided to travel to the city the following day, rendering him unable to transport them. The protagonist reminds him of the prior commitment regarding the return trip and insists that the promise be honored; he adds that he would have no objection if Chaudhry Sahib wished to share the carriage. In response, the driver explains that Chaudhry Sahib dislikes traveling alongside others, making it impossible for him to take them. This situation astonishes the protagonist's educated wife, prompting her to seek an explanation from the driver. Through this incident, Mansha Yad highlights the absolute authority wielded by the *Chaudhry* in feudal society and the helplessness of ordinary people in the face of that power.

"Nahin, ye woh baray aadmi hain. Sawariyon walay tangay mein nahin baithenge. Kya un ka qad bohat zyada hai? Woh boli aur kaha, hum tumhein honay nazar aate hain? Peer Ditta ne khaufzada ho kar idhar udhar dekha, phir bola, 'Un ke liye hamesha saalam le jana parta hai.'" 31

This incident illustrates the helplessness of the common man, who appears trapped by the oppression of the feudal system. The Chaudhry sets out for the city on horseback, while the coachman drives the protagonist and his wife in the same direction. During the journey, they encounter the Chaudhry, with his servants running behind his horse. The coachman maintains the *tonga's* speed in such a way that it does not overtake the Chaudhry but remains constantly behind him. The Chaudhry's behavior reflects his sense of superiority and an authoritarian mindset. This discriminatory attitude—rooted in power and status—kindles hatred in the heart of the protagonist's wife. Thus, through a seemingly ordinary incident, Mansha Yad effectively highlights class disparity, social superiority, and the plight of the common person within a feudal society.

"Sajhay ka Khet" mein bhi jaagirdari mukammal taur par mojud hai. Is afsane mein Mansha Yaad ne us tasveer ko pesh kiya hai jis mein nichlay tabqay ko izzat aur wazadari se zindagi guzaarne ki bajaye ikhlaqi giraawat par majboor kar diya jata hai. Afsane ke inteqam par afsane ke kirdar Mojo ki biwi aur Chaudhry ke mukalme ne afsane ko dilchasp bana diya hai. Yeh baat-cheet samaj ki us safaaki ko zahir kar rahi hai jo ikhlaqi aur samaji taur par giray paray logon ki halaat-e-zaar ki zimmedar hai." 32

"Tumhein yaad hai Chaudhry, tum mere saath kya sulook karte thay. Kaisi kaisi ghaleez khwahishain aur kaise rakhte thay mujhe, jaise main aurat nahin kya thi. Chaudhry, main bhi kisi ki beti thi, magar tum ne aur tumhare jaison ne mere saath jo sulook kiya, woh tumhein maloom hai. Main to bari masoom aur paak thi. Sirf kamzor aur ghareeb thi. Ghar se uplayon ke liye gobar jama karne nikli thi, tum logon ke hatthe charh gayi aur mujhe gobar se bhi badtar cheez bana diya gaya. Tumhein Manjhli ka naam lete hue sharam aani chahiye, woh tumhari beti hai. Bari saath walay gaon ke zaildar ki aur chhoti ka mujhe khud sahi andaza nahin, tumhari hai ya kis ki. Magar dekho, main ne tum Chaudhriyon, Zaildaron ki betiyon ko kitne achhay tareeqay se rakha hua hai." 33

The short story writer has presented a bitter and brutal societal reality with great artistic effectiveness: a world where members of the lower class—particularly women—fall victim to severe exploitation at the hands of *zamindars* (landowners), *jagirdars* (feudal lords), and *zaildars* (local notables). Members of this influential class abuse their power and social standing to violate the honor and dignity of poor women and subject them to sexual exploitation. A tragic aspect of this situation is that the offspring resulting from these illicit unions often

become targets of the same exploitative behavior. This is a deeply painful social tragedy that Mansha Yad has highlighted through his artistic insight and realistic portrayal. His writing exposes the repulsive nature of the feudal system, wherein the powerful class does not hesitate to trample upon human dignity and moral values to serve its own interests.

Tahira Iqbal's short story "Rekht" also reflects the decaying feudal system and the class-based attitudes associated with it. In this story, the author highlights the sense of superiority held by the feudal class and their contemptuous attitude toward the lower strata of society. The story employs words and phrases regarding individuals belonging to the *Machli* (fisherfolk) caste that convey hatred, scorn, and class prejudice. This conduct underscores a social divide in which a person's honor and dignity are determined solely by their caste and social status. It is in this context that the character of Malik Gam assumes significance; his introduction and conduct help in understanding the feudal mindset and the discriminatory attitudes shaped under its influence.

"Asal mein Malik Gaam Bana jaagir ka nawab tha. Nasal dar nasal taqseem ke baad aaba-o-ajdaad ki bari jaagiron se us tak aik mukhtasar sa qit'a-e-arazi bhi muntaqil ho saka. Us ke paas na to daulat aur jaagir se pukhta ki hui taqat aur iqtidaar mojud tha aur na hi riwayaat-o-aqdar se tarkeeb pai hui taqwiyat." 34

Another of his fictions 'Ganda Keeda' deals with the brutality and moral depravity of the feudal society. In this myth, the feudal lord is represented as a representative of an exploitative system in which women are treated as mere means to fulfill their desires. The landlords exploit these women by keeping them confined in their havelis and when they are no longer needed, they are thrown out of the havelis like worthless objects. During all this process, they do not feel any remorse for their cruel behavior. Through this situation, the author of the story has exposed the disrespect of women and the inhuman use of feudal power. Similarly, in the story "Khande" the injustices and class oppression of the feudal society have been reflected. In this myth, the humiliation of the lower class is considered by the feudal lord as part of his social status and authority. Characters like Arife Marathi represent the class which is subjected to contempt and ridicule in the feudal society. By humiliating such characters, the feudal lords maintain their sense of sovereignty and superiority. In this way, Tahira Iqbal has highlighted the exploitative character of the feudal system by making class discrimination, human humiliation and abuse of power the subject. See these quotes.

"Malik ne ghar ghar ghar kar poore zor se huqqa gargara kar chaandi ki ne ugal kar dhool mein thooka. 'Arifay, Arifay, Mirasi.' 'Ji Badshah Ji.' Arifa jeep ke tyre se ukharr kar saamne dher ho gaya." 35

"Malik ki bhawain tirschhi ho gayin. Shikari kutton ki baatein dheeli par gayin. Bahar tirschhi zabanain, uthay hue kaan, sudol kamar, jagmagati jild mein saans leti, tarapti nahin, galay mein bandhi ghunghriyon ki chhankaar aur qadmon ki ragar ragar mein Arifay ki chheenkein lipat gayin. 'Mar gaya, nahin bachta. Halqa ho ke marsaal.'" 36

These excerpts highlight the feudal lord's aura of authority and dominance, his imperious mindset, and the helplessness and vulnerability of the lower class. They clearly demonstrate how, in a feudal society, the powerful class maintains control over the weak through its influence, compelling them to live according to its dictates. In another of her short stories, "Intikhab" (The Choice), Tahira Iqbal presents a unique and realistic portrayal of feudal society. By analyzing the pre- and post-election landscape of rural life, the story highlights the flaws in the democratic system that curtail the ordinary citizen's freedom of opinion. While democracy ostensibly grants every individual the right to vote, in practice, the pressures of the community and the influence of feudal lords prevent voters in rural areas from making decisions based on their own free will. Instead, precedence is given to the collective decision of the community or the wishes of the feudal lord. Thus, by illustrating the contradiction between the theoretical ideal of democracy and its practical reality, the author demonstrates how feudal dominance restricts an individual's political freedom and right to choose.

"Bhaiyo! Gaon ka chalan badal gaya hai. Log be-lihaaz aur khud-sar ho chuke hain. Har gaon mein middle aur high school khul rahe hain. Har tehsil headquarter mein college ban gaye hain. Kami-kameen ke larkay parh likh kar clerk aur wakeel ban rahe hain. Ab to do-do acre walay bhi hum se tawaqqo rakhte hain ke hum khud ja kar un se vote maangein." 37

The short story writer has effectively highlighted the feudal mindset. The feudal lord views education as a significant threat to his power and supremacy, as education fosters awareness and consciousness, acquainting individuals with their rights and empowering them to raise their voices against exploitative systems. Consequently, in feudal society, education is often perceived as a major obstacle to maintaining one's dominance. Furthermore, for members of the lower class, facing contemptuous treatment and abusive language is not an anomaly; rather, such attitudes become a routine aspect of rural social life. Subjected to constant humiliation and social pressure, people from the lower class are eventually compelled to tolerate and resign themselves to these discriminatory attitudes. Thus, the author has illuminated an aspect of the feudal system wherein class-based oppression not only violates human dignity but also erodes the capacity for resistance among the oppressed class. "Hamare purkhon se election ke chand usool tay hain. Auraton ke vote kabhi nahin daalay gaye, ab ke baar bhi nahin daalay jayenge. Kamiyon ke vote aadhe aadhe taqseem honge. Gaon mein kul pachchees vote kamiyon ke hain. Baray dono mein terah aap ki taraf jayenge aur barah hamari taraf, aur chhotay dono mein terah hamari taraf

aur barah aap ki taraf. Apne apne mazaraon aur thekedaron ke vote ke hain. Unhein torne ki koshish larai ka aaghaz samjhi jayegi." 38

The short story "Charwaha" (The Shepherd) also addresses the oppression, violence, and class-based tyranny inherent in a feudal society. It portrays the life of a poor, helpless village shepherd who, due to his social and economic vulnerability, falls victim to the exploitative attitudes of the influential class. The shepherd embodies a deprived individual from the lower stratum of society, whose helplessness and lack of status become a source of mockery and derision for the feudal lords. Through this character, the author illustrates how the powerful class in a feudal system tramples upon the self-respect of the weak to maintain its dominance, turning their plight into a form of entertainment.

"Woh itna be-waqar aur haqeer tha ke be-waqati aur haqarat az khud us se sharmati thi. Goya us ki zaat tashaddud par uksane wala khud bara muharrik thi. Zaleel karo, zaleel karo ka chalta phirta ishtihaar. Pata nahin aisay insaan Khuda paida kar ke logon ko gunahgaar banne ka mauqa kyun faraham karta hai, jinhein dekh kar khwa-ma-khwa haathon mein khujli hone lagay aur zaban nai nai gaaliyon ka iktira karne lagay." 39

Observe another glimpse of the feudal lord's brutality in the short story.

"Woh baironi darwazay ki janib bhaaga, lekin unhon ne barh kar baalon se kheench liya aur zameen se do foot oopar utha kar pukhta deewar par de maara. Sar se mutthi bhar baal nikal kar faza mein urnay lagay aur khoon ki dhaari deewar par chalti hui qatra qatra farsh par tapakne lagi. Chaudhry ne barh kar shikari boot wala paon kanpati par dhar diya aur sar ko yun masalne laga jaise kisi taat par boot saaf kar raha ho. Us ke munh aur naak se khoon ke lothray nikal kar sang-e-marmar ke shaffaf farsh ko aalooda kar gaye." 40

In her short story "Izzat" (Honor), Tahira Iqbal highlights yet another significant aspect of the feudal mindset. The story centers on the traditional and self-constructed notion of honor, wherein the feudal lord equates male supremacy with displays of sexual prowess and virility. The feudal lord in the story marries off his underage son—who is still a student—and expects him to demonstrate his sexual potency as a vigorous, fully mature man; for him, this constitutes the very benchmark of masculinity and social superiority. Through this character, Tahira Iqbal exposes the archaic concept of honor prevalent in feudal society—a system that prioritizes male power and sexual dominance over human dignity, moral values, and the natural requirements of age. In doing so, the author critiques the narrow-mindedness of the feudal mentality, which measures honor and dignity against irrational and obsolete standards.

"Nazeeran Bi Bi! Mard kabhi aurat se chhota hua hai? Idhar jawani ka saal laga, udhar woh apni maan se bhi bara ho gaya. Jitni oonchi gardan utha ke betay ko dekhti hai, utna hi darti hai." 41

Aik yeh Qamo hai, sara jo apni zan se bhi chhota ho gaya hai. Beghairat, mujhe to apna nutfa hi nahin maloom parta. Kisi kharay ka jana hai tu ne." 42

This short story highlights various facets of the feudal mindset. To the feudal lord, education and knowledge hold little significance, as he views land, property, and hereditary authority—rather than intellectual insight or conscious development—as the true sources of power. In his view, the benchmark for social superiority is not intellectual capability or mental aptitude, but the ownership of vast tracts of land and control over economic resources. Thus, the author exposes the narrow outlook of the feudal system, which prioritizes material assets and hereditary status while disregarding the value of knowledge and awareness.

"Na tu ne do hazaar ka chaprasi banna hai, tu teen hazaar ka clerk lagta hai. In kitabon mein tu dhoondta kya hai? Dhai murabbay ka akela waaris. Derh pakka murabba, aik ghori-paal murabbay bhi sonay se bharay thehaal. To yeh kitabein chhorta kyun nahin?" 43

This is, in essence, a traditional manifestation of the feudal mindset, wherein land and property—rather than knowledge and consciousness—are regarded as the primary benchmarks of superiority and power. To safeguard his interests and hereditary status, the feudal lord does not hesitate to disregard moral principles and social responsibilities; for him, land ownership and control over economic resources are the true symbols of power and social standing.

Dr. Saleem Akhtar's short story "Gand Akhun" also highlights various facets of feudal society. In terms of theme and narrative style, the story bears a certain resemblance to Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi's "Lawrence of Thelebia." However, while "Lawrence of Thelebia" underscores the brutality of feudal society and the authoritarian stature of the feudal lord—who dominates weaker classes through sheer power and authority—the characters of Nazim Khan's grandfather and "Bade Khan Sahib" are equally significant in this context, as they serve to elucidate concepts of feudal identity, hereditary power, and social supremacy.

"Un ke mizaaj mein bhi wohi tantana tha jo us jaagirdar ke mizaaj mein paya jata hai jo aik second ke taraddud ke baghair apne mazaare ke pachaas jootay lagwa sakta ho. Unhein apni aala nasabi par bara fakhr tha aur unhon ne bhi apne aaba ki manind hazaar jatan se khoon ki har tarah ki aamezish se mehfooz rakha tha." 44

This short story employs deep satire to address claims of adherence to principles and moral codes. The author skillfully highlights the character's mindset and the contradiction between his words and actions, thereby revealing the internal conflicts within him.

During the 1970s, Anwar Ahmed penned allegorical short stories in opposition to General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law. His stories are generally brief; he avoids superfluous details, digressions, and sprawling narratives, striving instead to convey his ideas effectively and concisely. His work is characterized not only by brevity but also by incisive phrasing and potent satire. Beyond the atmosphere of oppression and tyranny, he critiques societal class disparities, social injustice, and exploitative forces. His story "Gongi Ghurahat" (Mute Growl) exemplifies this artistic approach. In it, the servant of a feudal lord named Haji Khwaja narrates the story of his master's daily routines and lifestyle. Outwardly, he appears to be a loyal, obedient dependent living off his master's wages; yet, the events he recounts expose the feudal lord's true character and exploitative nature. In reality, the narrator's account is underpinned by the author's profound social consciousness—an awareness of how influential feudal lords like Haji Khwaja assert authority over their subordinates and exploit them in various ways during their everyday lives. In this way, Anwar Ahmed has portrayed the oppression of feudal society, class disparity, and the abuse of power through the voice of a subservient employee, employing a satirical and symbolic style. Consider these excerpts.

"Haji Khawaja jhoom jhoom kar motor chala rahe thay aur main pichhli nashist par baith kar din bhar mein khaali hone wali botlon aur pamal izzaton ka hisaab kar raha tha." 45

"Woh darya-dil bhi hai aur mehrban bhi, shehar ki kani tawaifon aur sahafiyan ke us ne wazifay muqarrar kar rakhay hain." 46

"Haji Khawaja ki chaaron biwiyan ghar ke naujawan mulazimon ko haqarat ki bajaye muhabbat se dekhti hain aur raaton ko un ke yeh kirdar kapron ki maili jaibon mein muattar aur ujlay note thoonsti rehti hain." 47

Through the character of Haji Khwaja, this short story illustrates the mindset of a feudal lord who has relocated from a rural setting to the city, yet remains deeply imprinted with feudal values in his thinking and behavior. Although he now participates in economic activities as a capitalist, his way of thinking and his treatment of subordinates reflect that traditional feudal mentality which views power, authority, and social superiority as fundamental components of identity. Thus, the author demonstrates that a mere change in residence or economic status does not necessarily alter a person's mindset; feudal attitudes can persist even within new social and economic contexts.

Dr. Abdul Rasheed Tabassum's short story collection, **Dehqan Zaday** (Sons of the Soil), also reflects the social traditions rooted in feudal thought and temperament. The stories in this collection blend simplicity, wonder, intrigue, and the dichotomy of good and evil in a manner that evokes the flavor of traditional storytelling. Alongside depictions of traditional society, human behavior, and social values, the narratives also reveal the impact of the feudal system. The story "Dost Dushman" (Friend and Foe)—included in this collection—employs a simple narrative style to highlight various facets of the feudal system, its associated customs, and the mindset shaped by its influence. In this way, the story not only presents the outward manifestations of feudal society but also aids in understanding the intellectual and social attitudes inherent to that system.

"Main zameendar hoon. Mera gaon mere baap dada ki meeras hai. Yeh gaon mere ajdaad ke qabzay mein pehle pehal kab aur kaise aaya? Is ka mujhe ilm nahin. Main sirf itna jaanta hoon ke yeh gaon pehle mere baap ke paas tha, ab is ka malik main hoon. Jab main mar jaaunga to meri aulaad is ki malik hogi. Mere gaon ke log mujhe 'Sarkar' keh kar pukarte hain. Mera adna sa ishaara un ki qismat ka faisla kar sakta hai." 48

See also the justification of the feudal lord that somehow the feudal lord justifies the oppression for himself.

"Har tabqay ke log doosre logon ko apne se neecha dekhna chahte hain. Yahi baat agar hum mein bhi mojood hai to mahal-e-aetraz nahin. Hum zameendar apni kisi khaas aasami ko farigh-ul-baal hotay dekhein to use aitidaal par le aate hain. Hamare khaas aadmi us ke yahan chori kar ke use naan-e-shabina ka mohtaaj kar dete hain. Aasami lut luta kar hamare naam ki duhaai deti hai. Hum se faryaad karti hai. Hum us ki naqdī mein se chand sikke khairaat ke taur par use wapas de kar us ki aainda saat pushton par ehsaan kar dete hain. Hamari darya-dili zarb-ul-misl ban jaati hai. Hum farishta-e-rehmat tasawwur kiye jaate hain. Ilaaqay mein hamari daad-o-dahshat ki dhaak baith jaati hai." 49

M. Sadiq Qureshi is not considered a particularly accomplished short story writer in terms of technical craft; nevertheless, he has penned numerous stories centered on rural life and social conditions. His short story "Seema Teli" reflects the rural society of pre-partition Punjab. Although the story lacks technical finesse and stylistic maturity, it offers glimpses into the social role of the **Chaudhrys**, the influence of the religious clergy, and the dynamics of the class system.

In Urdu short fiction, the concept of the feudal system is generally portrayed through the lenses of power, coercion, exploitation, oppression, and class disparity. Writers have depicted the feudal lord as the representative of a powerful class that maintains its dominance over the weak and marginalized—relying on economic status, land ownership, and social influence. Within this system, peasants, tenant farmers, and laborers remain deprived of economic prosperity despite their toil, while the feudal class safeguards its own interests by capitalizing on their labor. In a feudal society, land is not merely a symbol of economic resources; it becomes a means to wield power, secure social status, and control the lives of others. Consequently, the feudal figure often emerges as someone

who treats his own will as law and, emboldened by his social standing, does not hesitate to trample upon the rights, dignity, and freedom of the poor.

CONCLUSION

By focusing on various facets of this system, Urdu short story writers have highlighted the issues plaguing rural life that arise from feudal domination. These short stories vividly portray the helplessness of farmers, the burden of debt, forced labor, dispossession of land, the exploitation of women, and the vulnerability of the weak when confronted by the powerful. In some stories, the feudal lord's oppression manifests as direct violence and intimidation, while in others, he maintains his dominance through social customs, family traditions, the caste system, tribal influence, and local power structures. Thus, the feudal system emerges not merely as an economic structure but as a mindset that prioritizes division over equality, self-interest over justice, and power over human dignity. A significant feature of the feudal system in Urdu short stories is that its impact is not confined to rural areas or agrarian life; it persists in various forms even after the transition to urban society. Certain characters do not abandon their feudal mindset despite migrating from villages to cities, continuing to seek dominance over others through economic capital, social connections, and political influence. In this context, short story writers also highlight the interplay between the feudal mindset and capitalist interests. Consequently, the figure of the feudal lord in Urdu fiction transcends the image of a mere oppressive landowner; he becomes a symbol of an entire social system wherein the authority and interests of a few take precedence over collective welfare, human freedom, and social justice.

In short, the portrayal of the feudal system in Urdu short stories serves as a literary and intellectual response to social inequality, class conflict, and human exploitation. Through the character and conduct of the feudal lord, short story writers have exposed the societal attitudes that deprive vulnerable classes of their fundamental rights. In this way, the Urdu short story not only highlights the oppressive structure of the feudal system but also underscores the need for a society founded on human dignity, economic autonomy, social equality, and justice...

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