Reimagining Mythological Illusions in Usman T. Malik's "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi": A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines how contemporary Pakistani speculative fiction writers have experimented with various writing styles by analysing Usman T. Malik's (2021) short story, "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi". One of the most significant styles is the incorporation of mythological elements from folktales into contemporary writing. This study will examine the text's discourse structures, mythological elements, and socio-cultural elements through the lens of Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Using a qualitative analysis, this study closely examines the interplay of different voices, perspectives, and cultural contexts to highlight how "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi" reinterprets and integrates with traditional mythological narratives in our folktales. Through a detailed CDA analysis, this research highlights how the text challenges and redefines conventional interpretations of mythology, ultimately contributing to broader societal, cultural and political discourses in Pakistani Speculative Fiction.

Keywords: Speculative fiction, Pakistani Speculative Fiction, mythological, folktales, Critical Discourse Analysis.

Introduction
Pakistani anglophone writing has evolved over the years, and many works have entered world literature. Pakistani Urdu Fiction has a long history of magical realism in oral stories known as Dastaan or Kissa (Khalid, 2024). Amidst this evolution, Pakistani speculative fiction writers have been experimenting with form and narratives in their stories. Although this genre is underexplored, these writers have been creating space for exploring the mythological elements previously found in South Asian folktales by reinterpreting them in the contemporary world. Kanwal and Mansoor (2001) recall "works such as Alif Layla (The Thousand and One Nights), Dastan-e-Amir Hamza, Muhammad Husain Jha's Tilism-e-Hoshruba, Fardosi's Shahnamah, Ibne-e-Safi's famous Imran Series and Abdul Haleem Sharar's Firdous-e-Bareen'' (p.244) as influences in Pakistani speculative fiction. The characters and narratives of these folktales are being rewritten in the works of speculative fiction in nuanced contexts. One of the significant topics regarding Anglophone literature is its capacity to deconstruct or reconstruct the national identity. This type of fiction usually explores themes of identity, belonging, migration, gender, and politics (Nazir, 2018).

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Usman T. Malik is one of the prominent writers of contemporary Pakistani speculative fiction. "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi" (2021) introduces the character Farah, a pichal pairi and Raza, the interviewer. The story highlights many elements related to pichal pairi and does not hesitate to mention contemporary socio-cultural elements alongside them. This study examines Malik's (2021) usage of mythological elements to present various social, cultural and political issues. Pichal pairi is a renowned figure from South Asian folktales, symbolising allure and terror. The study examines how similar themes, elements, and characteristics recur throughout these stories to create a homogeneous socio-cultural representation.

Fairclough's (1995) CDA model provides a comprehensive framework for this study. CDA specifically focuses on understanding how particular language choices and structures shape different forms of discourse. It foregrounds the importance of the texts' underlying ideologies through a range of verbal strategies and writing techniques that convey hidden meanings. In this study, by analysing the linguistic and discursive structures within the short story "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi" (2021), the aim is to uncover Malik's reimagination of mythological illusions. This approach reveals how these illusions are recontextualised to reflect and articulate a contemporary political and socio-cultural environment. Through this analysis, the study highlights complex ways in which language and discourse are interwoven with the ideologies that shape our understanding of contemporary society.

Research Questions

How does Spring Love #Pichal pairi reimagines the mythological figure of the pichal pairi and mythological illusions within a contemporary context?

What are the key strategies used in the text to challenge or reinforce traditional mythological narratives?

In what ways does the narrative reflect and engage with broader societal, cultural and political discourses?

Literature Review
Pakistani Speculative Fiction and Folktales

Pakistani Speculative Fiction emerged as a genre in which writers reimagine the mythological illusions of South Asian folktales. Kanwal and Mansoor (2021) state that the writers bring together "the speculative genre in responding to more contemporary problems associated with patriarchy, fundamentalism, gender issues, neo-colonialism, marginalisation, racism, war, technology and anxieties associated with emergent forms of nationalism" (p.244). Moreover, Pakistani anglophone writers aim to address contemporary realities worldwide. The genre is characterised by history, multiculturality, and local language. It is composed of the "heterogeneous cultural stimuli that have percolated into the subcontinent since millennia" (p. 245). The accurate history and origin of Pakistani speculative fiction are difficult to trace, but one can find references and inspirations for the genre.

Folktales are not just the stories of children; they hold an important place in a culture. Batool et al. (2023) state that folktales have been told with an aim of "entertaining and educating people, as well as preserving the cultural heritage of societies worldwide" (p.575). In the folktales, the protagonists encounter conflicts. They are required to make wise decisions and act upon them efficiently. The researchers studied folk tales of the Shina community from Gilgit Baltistan. The study highlights that these stories carry hidden messages. In short, these are not simply stories but are designed to serve a purpose. They

give listeners and readers a glimpse into a society's culture, history, and moral values. Beyond moral and social values, these folktales emphasise diversity when circulated across various cultures, with minor changes. "By experiencing stories from different cultures, children can discover valuable insights about another culture's values, beliefs, history, practices, and customs." (AugustHouse, n.d.). They provide insights into socio-cultural history and instil a sense of responsibility in the people. These stories were told by the head to prevent fights among the village people. The people committing mistakes could relate to it and realise their faults. Later, they were told to emphasise a particular behaviour and to inspire them to follow the rules.

Indigenous folklore remains a significant store of various stories and themes. Children's fantasy stories like Nannhay kay Karnamay, Angoothi Kahan Gai, Naag, Maria series, as well as Umro Ayyar series, are prominent examples in this context. These writers merge indigenous folklore with contemporary fiction to generate a debate about what our literary tradition is. Pakistani authors use and fuse elements from "djinn mythology, Qur'anic eschatology, Desi traditions, local folklore, and Islamic feminisms in their narratives to encourage familiarity with alternative world views" (Sadaf & Kanwal, 2023, p.4). The writers continue to present themselves in the world literary space with a strong representation of the contemporary world surrounding them.

Malik's engagement with speculative fiction

Malik makes an effort to represent the Pakistani socio-cultural context in his stories authentically. The stories are not preachy, but they carry hidden messages and values. The anthology titled Midnight Doorways: Fables from Pakistan (2021) highlights the imaginative and complex structure of local folktales. This showcases the vibrancy of traditional storytelling. He uses 'desi context' in his speculative fiction, creating an engaging and thoughtful blend. His narratives are set in familiar settings and succeed in transporting readers to an alternative space. Spanning from Lahore to Mohenjo-Daro, his stories are deeply rooted in the Pakistani context. He highlights the essence of the culture. Through his writings, he successfully appropriates and celebrates indigenous culture, language and tradition in storytelling (Arif, 2022).

Malik often uses Urdu words related to culture and names of Pakistani places to present Pakistani culture. Khalid et al. (2022) state that the appropriation technique is a creative space for local culture and expression. Malik utilises techniques such as untranslated Urdu words, fusion of meaning, lexical experimentation and code-switching to make it an indigenous and relatable story. The language in his speculative fiction represents cultural and social norms. He does not translate the world for non-native readers. He uses English to reshape it and present the Pakistani context to the world. He mentions local food, dresses, landmarks and other cultural items. He presents the contemporary realities of Pakistan while experimenting with Speculative fiction.

Rettino (2017) argues that Malik's fiction employs magical elements to reveal a disconnection between truth and reality. The researcher mentions this genre as 'weird fiction', emphasising that it represents the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous. Weird fiction disrupts reality and represents what is alienated in this modernity. Weird fiction seems stranger than magical realism. The 'weird' elements of this fiction interfere with the daily life of the characters and stimulate horror. By engaging with these experimental narratives, Malik also highlights the problems of representation in world literature. In short, he is not only representing the culture and language but also using narrative ecology. He is experimenting with fiction and emerging as an influential voice in Pakistani literature.

DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA provides a space to examine the novel's underlying voices. Fairclough's CDA focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology. It also focuses on how discourse shapes and is shaped by socio-cultural elements. Such ideologies and structures are present in the media and in every other text we encounter in our daily lives. Language shapes people's perspectives and views. The critical analysis of this discourse is significant in analytical studies as it explores the link between language, ideology and identity (Bilal et al., 2021).

Compared to other CDA frameworks, Fairclough's model is considered significant for novel analysis because it examines the interaction between linguistic practices and social, political, and cultural contexts (Crystal, 2008). AbdulMaleki and Pooresfahani (2021) analyse BozorgAlavi's Her Eyes (1952) through CDA to examine its political narrative. At the descriptive level, the researchers focus on linguistic elements in the novel and their connection to power operating in society. It shows that binary oppositions shape the author's perception of social reality. There are two dominant discourses in the text: the Pahalvi Dynasty and Marxist ideology. The lexical and syntactic elements align with Marxist ideology that stood in opposition to the hegemonic discourse of the Pahalvi regime.

CDA is not limited to linguistic analysis. It can also be used to study literary discourse. Hoessseini and Sattari (2018) study The Beggar (1965) at the levels of descriptions, interpretation and explanation. The study examines linguistic choices and their ideological and social meanings to show how sociological factors influence texts and their production. The findings highlight the social content by using Arabic structures, nominal constructions, and rhetoric. Moreover, the author uses narrative strategies such as interior monologue, description and humour to convey ideological meanings. The writing reflects the dominant cultural values, tensions and social restrictions within Egyptian society. The CDA analysis highlights Egyptian society through symbolic representation and subjective experience.

Moghadam et al. (2021) study You're No Stranger Here (2016) using Fairclough's approach. They study the discourse of illiteracy presented in the text by analysing the text in three stages. They examine vocabulary, grammar, and word choices for the first stage. For the second stage, context, intertextuality and discourse arrangement are kept in view. Lastly, they investigate the social tussle between the power structures. Similarly, Teymoury et al. (2024) examine collocations, sentence structures, slang words, binary oppositions, and pronouns in Ahle Ghargh (1989). The aim is to examine the discourse of returning to oneself in its historical context. The author of the text presents contemporary trends blandly and emphasises going back to the roots. Hence, the case applies the CDA model to study the hegemonic structures in the text that convey this theme of returning to the roots.

Methodology and Framework

A qualitative research approach is used to analyse the text. This study analyses the text using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA. Fairclough's (1989, 1992, 1995) model for CDA focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology, and how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures. The research systematically investigates how social dynamics shape language and, in turn, how language reinforces existing discourse. An in-depth reading of the text will provide insights into how language

constructs meaning and reflects the complexities of social interaction. The use of vocabulary, phrases, grammar, metaphors, mood, and setting in the text will be studied to highlight how Malik (2021) reimagines mythological elements to convey more profound meaning and address issues at the ground level.

Fairclough (1995) describes texts as social spaces in which meaning is generated through social interactions. Texts make up the knowledge, beliefs and social subjects. That is why the textual analysis is conducted at multiple levels. This analysis requires the study of structure at the phonological, grammatical, and lexical levels.

The refined model presented by Fairclough (1995) is a comprehensive approach for discourse examination. According to this model, any discourse must be studied at three levels to be interpreted. First of all is the study of the linguistic characteristics of any text. Secondly is the production and receiving of the text, and lastly, a broader social practice in which the text belongs (Yang, 2023). Keeping this in view, Fairclough demonstrated that in any analysis, the three levels are a) text analysis (description), b) discursive practice analysis (interpretation), and c) social practice analysis (explanation).

 The first is the micro level that explores the specific use of language like metaphors, rhetorical devices, vocabulary and grammar used in any text. The second dimension is a meso-level exploration of how different discourses interact within the narrative and how these discursive practices reflect the text's broader ideological and social context. The third macro dimension reflects the socio-cultural practices and structures that shape and are shaped by the texts. This includes examining the ideologies and social structures embedded in the narrative and how the text engages with contemporary cultural and societal issues by introducing a supernatural element (Discourse Analyzer, 2024).

Discussion and Analysis

The story "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi" is set in contemporary Lahore, where ancient tales intertwine with modern life. The city is rich with history, architecture, old stories and traditions. The protagonist, Farah, is a supernatural creature known as a pichal pairi in South Asian folktales. The story introduces us to a boy named Raza, who is a young journalist working for the esteemed Dawn Magazine. Raza thrives on adventurous stories, and in an attempt to make a thrilling story, he is looking for a pichal pairi now, when the story begins. He sets on a mission to write about the pichal pairi rumoured to live under the secret tunnels beneath the Ravi.

As described earlier, Pichal pairi is a character from South Asian folktales. The narratives vary. Some stories portray it as dangerous, while others portray it as benign. Pichal pairi tales do not specifically state whether it is harmful. It appears and disappears with a horrible experience to witness. (MRU, 2024). This ambiguity adds layers to the narrative and sets the stage for the complex interactions between Raza and Farah. The term pichal pairi has also been derived from an Urdu-Hindi word that precisely translates as 'back-footed'. This characteristic is central to identity and suggests that a creature navigates the world in a way distinct from conventional movement.

The story begins when Raza searches for a pichal pairi, and he eventually finds Farah. Their initial encounters are filled with tension and the interplay of fear and curiosity. This different yet mysterious creature captivates Raza's heart. As their relationship develops, Raza finds himself drawn to her as a mirror of his emotions. The story blurs boundaries between reality and myth.

Textual Analysis (Description stage)

In Fairclough's (1995) model, the first step is text analysis, in which we look for

vocabulary, grammar, and patterns in the text that generate a motif. This analytical stage is important because it helps identify motifs that emerge from the language. The selection of words and grammatical structures shapes societal perceptions and plays an important role in dismantling, reinforcing, and shaping ideologies and beliefs. These elements are instrumental in the pursuit of power and dominance across political, economic, and social spheres (Hassan et al., 2019). This stage uses functional linguistics and has three particular domains. A) Ideational functions are the smaller narratives present in any society, b) the interpersonal domain is concerned with the meaning produced during any interaction and c) the textual domain is the basic theme of the text produced. These elements come together to produce a homogenous narrative (Rogers & Schaenen, 2014)

In this stage, linguistic analysis helps to determine how language is used to convey a specific message. In this context, Malik (2021) presents a captivating reinterpretation of pichal pairi from the folklore. Rather than presenting the usual depictions found in storied tales, he introduces pichal pairi with human names, characteristics, and emotions. This portrayal subverts the motif of being the other in conventional representations. This particular pair is not an outside entity but co-exists with human beings. This particular pair is not entirely like the ones in folktales. She has humane features and character traits. The supernatural aspect of her existence is not described as bizarre. The text remains natural in her representation. Moreover, the use of the pronoun "she" throughout the text humanises her. It emphasises a deeper connection with readers and invites them to perceive her as more than a fantastical being.

In addition, Malik (2021) enhances the character's representations by carefully using descriptive adjectives and vibrant metaphors. The space and atmosphere around her are not portrayed as scary. Phrases such as "she was smaller than I had expected, five-three perhaps," alongside descriptions like "pretty, with green eyes and walnut hair with copper and gold hues," paint a vibrant picture and enhance her persona. These details build an aura around the Pichal pairi's character. Additionally, the fluidity and naturalism of phrases such as "in the moonlight, her feet gleamed like marble" add to the already built image. The feature that is supposed to be scary is shown as somewhat intriguing. The phrases such as "she spoke", "she was smiling", "she lifted an eyebrow", and vice versa sound natural and do not create a sense of horror around pichal pairi. Unlike the unsettling and horror-filled representations associated with such creatures, this character is more relatable. This approach deepens the character and subverts traditional narratives that align mythological figures with fear and danger. By bringing these elements together, Malik (2021) presents a narrative that redefines perceptions of the pichal pairi. It invites the readers to reflect on identity, humanity, and the fusion of myth in contemporary storytelling.

In the story, a transition occurs as Malik (2021) not only subverts various elements of storytelling but also maintains the essence of a traditional pichal pairi. There is an element of fantasy and the supernatural around her, but she is not shown as a monster in the folktales. One of the prominent characteristics of pichal pairi is the presence of backward feet. In the first scene that introduces Farah to readers, she is shown "massaging her backwards feet on pebbles from the river bed". Rather than removing this trait, Malik (2021) creatively shows her ability to walk and work like ordinary humans. This is the blending of the mythical with the real. Farah further elaborates on the importance of this message, telling Raza that it is suitable for "plantar fasciitis," a term referring to tissue important for walking and movement. Moreover, the text shows that Farah does not reside in a conventional home but rather navigates through "tunnels that go from the Fort to the Ravi and under the river". This imaginative setting transports readers into a rich cultural

landscape, incorporating places such as "Shahi Murgh Channay at Lakshmi", "the Colony at the Queens Road", "Egerton Road", and "Plaza Cinema", firmly establishing the story's setting in the vibrant city of Lahore.

The title 'spring love' of the work is also justified through the interactions of the protagonists, who are brought together in the season of renewal and growth. The symbolism and metaphors have an ideological effect on readers as they read the story. Right from the beginning, the attention is caught as Malik (2021) chooses a delightful environment rather than a filthy one. The readers feel relatable by the natural infusion of reality and fantasy. Raza, the narrator, mentions the season with phrases like "Spring rain" and "Springtime in the City of Gardens". This establishes the thematic connection to the title. The second part of the title, 'Pichal pairi', is evident throughout the narrative, presenting a blend of traditional lore and the contemporary. The symbol '#' is also a clever attempt at modernising the terminology, as this symbol is widely recognised as 'hashtag'. It is often used to create trends and discussions on social media platforms. In this way, the story is linked with the contemporary contexts relatable to the new generation.

The grammar and word choices are relatable, and the scenes between Raza and Farah feel like those of a couple of friends hanging out together. Raza is shown to have some wonder and curiosity, not immense fear about pichal pairis. He tries to get to know Farah by asking light, fun questions. He calls her a "witch" to which she humorously replies, "I didn't realize I'd be stuck with an idiot who wouldn't know the difference between a witch and a churail" (Malik, 2021). This exchange highlights the chemistry between them but also the complexity of their relationship. He apologises and starts questioning her family and life. He learns about her experiences and background as the narrative unfolds. The complexity of this relationship is maintained when, by the climax of the story, Raza says, "You're different", answering questions about the impact of COVID-19 on Farah. This implies that he is connected with her, but there is still a natural gap between them that cannot be filled. The language used throughout the text is simple and relatable.

At this level, the analysis highlights that "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi" engage in linguistic and stylistic strategies to reimagine traditional folkloric representations of the pichal pairi. Through various lexical choices, metaphorical imagery, and contemporary references, the text counters binary oppositions such as human/monstrous and real/supernatural that are usually featured in mythological discourse. The reshaping of folklore through transitivity patterns and modality creates ambiguity rather than certainty. It allows the supernatural to coexist with a complex narrative space. These features not only enhance the story but actively reconstruct the pichal pairi as a discursive figure through which meaning is created. Thus, at the descriptive level, the analysis highlights that language functions as an ideological tool, reshaping folklore to represent contemporary anxieties rather than merely producing plain mythic stories.

In short, the carefully chosen terminology, creative wordplay and language are evidence of a successfully curated world where wonder, mythological elements, quirkiness, and contemporary and supernatural elements are in interplay, creating an immersive reading experience. This demonstrates that deliberate language choices construct feelings of fear, horror, otherness, relatability, gender, and other beliefs and ideologies.

Discursive Practice (Interpretation stage)
The second level of Fairclough's model focuses on the analysis of discursive practice. This level demonstrates "how a text is generated, circulated and used in a social set-up" (Hassan et al., 2019). In this context, Malik (2021) has created this world not to present a simple story but to discuss social, cultural, and political practices. He aims to reinterpret and

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celebrate indigenous roots and culture by drawing on the mythological elements of indigenous folktales and Urdu terminology, and by representing Pakistan in the text. This approach allows him to knit together contemporary issues while grounding his story in traditional narratives. He creates a bridge between the past and the present. Sadaf and Kanwal (2023) state that works like Malik's (2021) Midnight Doorways: Fables from Pakistan (2021), by a Pakistani publication, Kitab, have received awards. This shows that such literary contributions are important in presenting a fresh Pakistani image to the global world. This broadens the international literary landscape but also plays a crucial role in reviving the publishing industry. Through this lens, we can examine how Malik's work explores dualities of modernity and tradition. The dual thematic engagement is central to the objectives met in the study of "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi", which aims to identify similar trajectories.

The story is based on Pakistani folklore, but the discourse is recycled as needed. As the narrative progresses, this integration becomes increasingly innovative. The character of Farah shows this blend as her personality and appearance reflect those of a modern young woman. Raza thinks of her as being "woke" yet "vintage". The descriptive imagery used in the text, Pichal Pairi, is seen wearing "ripped jeans, a white T-shirt with WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?" This specific choice of attire mirrors contemporary fashion trends and resonates with a rebellious spirit against societal norms. The phrase on her shirt suggests an underlying critique of societal expectations, reflecting the pressure the younger generation faces over its choices and lifestyles. Furthermore, she smokes cigarettes and eats "shahi murgh channay at Laxmi". This reference shows a blend of personal choices and cultural aspects. Malik (2021) emphasises her fluency in "perfect English", her educational background at "LGS" and "NCA" and her reliance on contemporary transportation applications like "Careem" for travelling in the busy city of Lahore. These details represent urban youth and symbolise an evolving middle-class identity in Pakistan that simultaneously embraces traditions and modern influences.

Furthermore, the story contains hidden ideologies and messages. It is a social critique and a way to empathise with the people. Conventionality conveys society's norms, fears, and traditions. Farah's contemporary lifestyle is elaborated by showing that she watches "Pakistani dramas", participates in the "Aurat March", and hates "manspreading, mansplaining, and the Jonas Brothers" (Malik, 2021). Each of these engagements reflects her active involvement in culture and Pakistani society. It paints Farah as a relatable figure indulged in local culture and global discourse. Interestingly, while Farah embodies modernity, elements of wonder and the supernatural are also present. However, it is important to note that this character is not presented as an outcast. In an attempt to humanise her, he also showed that she got sick while doing social work during COVID-19. This incident also marks a turn in the story and highlights the drastic effects of the pandemic on people's lives.

The author's Pakistani identity is an important context for this analysis. As he has indigenous roots, one can rely on him for an accurate representation of Pakistani culture and cities. It is not a foreign person who has experienced this culture who is writing the story. His position as someone well familiar with the narrative's presentation affects readers' minds. That is why his representation of modernity and tradition feels relatable. Moreover, CDA questions the reader's position in this stage. It concerns what the reader is made to feel. In this story, readers feel empathy for the pichal pairi. She is not shown as a monster who cultivates fear in the readers. The only element of wonder is this pichal pairi, but she is not shown as an outcast. These descriptions create a sense of certainty about the presence that humans possess.

At the level of discursive practice (interpretation), the study highlights that Malik's (2021) short story employs the process of recontextualisation. It draws on traditional South Asian folklore while reshaping it within the norms of contemporary speculative fiction. The text engages in intertextual dialogue with traditional mythological narratives, yet reframes them through modern themes, stylistic experimentation, and contemporary storytelling. The author blends folklore with contemporary narrative modes. The story prompts readers to interpret pichal pairi not as a superstition but as a cultural symbol. This hybridisation of genre and discourse shapes how the text is produced and consumed, and it incorporates logical elements that appear as reflective commentary. Consequently, the discursive practice reveals how inherited cultural narratives are deliberately appropriated and reshaped to produce new meanings within a modern literary context.

All in all, through these characterisations and thematic explorations, Malik (2021) references show a wholly natural and modern world. By incorporating intertextuality and hybridity among the mythological illusions and the contemporary context, the text aims to resonate with readers.

Social Practice (Explanation stage)

In analysing the third level of the CDA model, specifically social practice analysis, socio-cultural and political issues in the text can be readily identified. Although speculative fiction may not initially appear related to human rights, writers in this genre are strategically building connections between social justice and ecological challenges. These authors write about social issues and the dilemmas people face in an ecologically threatened world (Sadaf & Kanwal, 2023).

The story touches upon the injustice done to refugees, portraying them as marginalised individuals whose voices are often silenced. The theme is exemplified through the character of Farah, who is shown to be a refugee in a moment of vulnerability when she tells Raza, "When the Soviets invaded, my father knew the differently abled would be the first to get targeted" (Malik, 2021). This quote highlights the brutal realities of displacement and the vulnerabilities of differently-abled individuals during state conflicts. The representation of such discrimination invites readers to examine the uncomfortable truths of society and its neglect of these groups. These problems range from the state level to the community level. That is why it is important to address them in an indigenous context. Likewise, the story shares a personal experience of bullying as Farah confesses that she was once the target of harassment at school. This insight is important as it reflects the broader societal issues of bullying and alienation faced by marginalised individuals.

As the story progresses, we learn how the traditional myths of pichal pairi, once depicted as a being who lured men into traps or vanished mysteriously, are reimagined in a contemporary context. In a scene, this modern-day pichal pairi participates in an "Aurat March" in Lahore where she proudly wears a kurta with the words "PICHAL PAIRIS ARE WOMEN TOO" written on the back (Malik, 2021). This innovative scene emphasises three critical social issues: a) the rights of those who are considered as outcasts based on colour, race, economic status, caste or vice versa, b) the advocacy of women's rights, and c) the importance of the "Aurat March" in today's Lahore and Pakistan as a whole. Throughout this powerful scene, various contemporary slogans such as "My body! My choice!", "MY DAUGHTER, HER CHOICE" and "DISTRIBUTE MITHAI. IT'S A GIRL!" Resonate with the audience. It reflects the activism surrounding gender equity and women's rights (Malik, 2021). He makes the scene more impactful by showing a broader range of participants during the march, including "an eighty-year-old lady in a wheelchair", "Women of all ages and sizes", and even uncles and kids (Malik, 2021). This

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diverse presence signifies a collective awakening and a society's responsibility towards such issues. It is an example of how the conversation around rights has been changed in recent times.

As Malik (2021) continues to highlight the themes of identity, language appropriation, and cultural preservation, he clearly intertwines these elements with the roots. Farah's attempt to tell Raza that she is half-Afghani and half-Abarimon speaks for itself. In this statement, she owns her multidimensional identity while acknowledging her experiences of displacement. She has empathy for the people and the place where she lives. This empathy extends beyond her journey, as she argues with Raza that many people around Ravi live without homes. "They're going to starve when the rich shut themselves in their mansions. I have resources. I can help them" (Malik, 2021). Through this dialogue, the writer invites readers to reflect on their moral responsibility in these times of crisis.

Following this, as the narrative reaches its climax, she leaves Raza because he is likely to be affected if he stays with her, and chooses to help her people. By the end of the story, Raza finds a hidden tunnel leading to her room. There, readers encounter numerous cultural and literary references. There are collected works of Parveen Shakir, a copy of Sadequain's artwork, Sylvia Plath, posters like Dirty Dancing and Rang De Basanti. These possessions highlight her connection with culture and literature and also symbolise her hybrid identity. As the story reaches its end, Raza has to leave her as she insists on their separation for the sake of her greater mission. Malik (2021) writes an epilogue scene in which Raza receives a postcard from an unknown sender, after the mailman died two weeks ago. The postcard's contents are not mentioned, creating the atmosphere of wonder and terror associated with pichal pairi, i.e., Farah.

At the level of social practice (explanation), the study finds that the reimagined pichal pairi functions as a symbolic site that highlights broader social problems and ideological tensions in contemporary Pakistani society. Rather than reinforcing traditional fears, the text uses the mythological figure to engage with issues of marginalisation, emotional alienation and other indigenous narratives. The story reflects and critiques important discourses regarding morality, belonging, gender, and otherness. This functions particularly within a context shaped by rapid social change. Speculative fiction emerges as a cultural space where myth enables indirect but powerful engagement with social realities. From the CDA perspective, the pichal pairi is revealed not as a supernatural villain but as a discursive metaphor through which power relations and social norms are represented and challenged.

In conclusion, "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi" illustrates the enduring power of myths to evolve and resonate with new generations. It challenges us to rethink the boundaries between the past and present, inviting us to find new meanings in old stories. Through rich character development and themes, Malik's (2021) work offers a commentary on social justice, identity, and the ongoing struggle for human rights.

Conclusion

The detailed analysis of "#Spring Love #Pichal Pairi" has uncovered that the story blends traditional South Asian folklore with contemporary indigenous themes. It extends to act as a discursive and ideological work. At the textual level, the analysis highlights the evocative language choices, the complex narrative, and the metaphorical structures that reconsider the figure of pichal pairi. It delineates the folkloric binaries and allows the complexity to create meaning. At the level of discursive practice, the analysis revealed the intertextual richness as Malik (2021) chooses the mythological elements of a folktale while adapting speculative fiction. The author intends to connect the past and the present and to let readers

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generate new interpretations. Lastly, the social practice stage highlights that reimagining serves as a critique of existing discourses, particularly those related to gendered experiences and identity. These findings emphasise that the contemporary reimagining of folklore enables speculative fiction to serve as a space that offers fresh perspectives on contemporary issues and fosters cultural dialogue. All in all, this study contributes to the discussions on mythology, discourse, and identity. It also opens avenues for future research into the adaptation of folklore in literature and its impact on social realities.

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