

# Urban Uprisings in Asia: Women's Social and Political Activism in Contemporary Asian Literature in English

## CFP

From peaceful marches to road blockades and even violence, urban uprisings in Asia have become a powerful way to demand equality, freedom, and recognition. Despite their disruptive nature, they have played a crucial role in shaping political discourse and bringing attention to previously ignored issues. The occupation of streets has long been a common tactic employed by women in liberation struggles and fights for equal rights. In recent years, women's active role and participation in the formation and development of urban uprisings in Asia have become the subject matter of many literary works, representing a fertile ground for critical attention.

Since the 1960s and especially over the past two decades, cities in Asia have witnessed a resurgence of urban uprisings driven by varying degrees of intensity and political motivations. Defined as "rapid spread of collective action in an urban context, from district to district and/or city to city, which may or may not include violence, looting and torching" (Mayer et al., 2016), urban uprisings in the Asian context have become a prominent and potent way to express disapproval of government policies or social injustice while demanding equality, freedom, and recognition. Over the past few decades, urban uprisings in Asia have led to significant changes such as the overthrowing of authoritarian regimes or policy reforms that address social injustices (Ortiz et al., 2022; Slater, 2009). However, these uprisings have also posed challenges for governments who have often confronted them with harsh crackdowns. Some prominent examples from the continent include: The 1964 race riots in Singapore, The May Incident of 1969 in Malaysia, The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and massacre in China, The Taiwan "Yellow Vest" protests in 2018, the 2010s Arab Spring across much of the Arab countries in the Middle East, the Anti-Taliban protests in Afghanistan, continual demonstrations in India and Pakistan over human rights, and the recent wave of unrest in Central Asian countries like Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Since the late 1960s, women have emerged as prominent figures in many of the major political movements across the continent. Recent events such as the Mahsa Amini protests in Iran, the 2022 Hijab protest in India, the 2020 Anti-rape protests in Bangladesh, and the Anti-violence protests in Pakistan are all examples of women's demonstrations against injustice and inequality that have evolved into nationwide urban uprisings. These movements serve as indicators of women's activism in challenging, contesting, and disrupting the social, cultural, and political fabric of their societies. It is important to note that many of these movements, as the sociologist Asef Bayat (2023) observes, are not necessarily "feminist revolutions" or simply revolts of younger generations. Rather, they represent a desire to transform the status quo and reclaim a free and dignified life. Women's rallies and protests in the streets are often triggered by violent police action or met with strong resistance from political authorities. This has led to imprisonment, abuse, and deaths of young women and girls. Despite these challenges, women continue to play a crucial role in shaping political discourse and driving social change (Das, 1990; Roces & Edwards, 2010). Their activism has inspired countless others to join them in their fight for equality and justice.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the literary representation of women's social and political activism in the context of urban uprisings. This emerging genre of literary studies has opened up exciting new avenues for exploring the experiences of women who have participated in these movements, and for examining the ways in which their stories have been told and

interpreted. While sociological studies have long focused on urban uprisings, they have tended to overlook the specific experiences of women within these movements (Derichs & Fennert, 2014; Fernandes, 2014). By contrast, literary studies offer a unique perspective on the role that women have played in shaping and driving these movements forward (Tally Jr, 2017). In particular, there is a need for more attention to be paid to the representation of women's activism in Asian countries. This is an area that has been relatively neglected by scholars, but one that offers rich opportunities for focused case studies and comparative analyses. Some of the key topics that could be explored within this field include the ways in which women have enabled and developed urban uprisings; the topographies of women's social movements across Asia; the underlying causes for women's individual and collective activism; the obstacles and challenges that they face; and the accomplishments that they have achieved in terms of transforming social norms and realizing their rights. Overall, this emerging field promises to shed new light on an important aspect of contemporary social and political history.

The book aims to shed light on the diverse forms of women's activism in urban areas throughout the Asian continent. The editors seek to not only comprehend each case as a distinct phenomenon but also to identify commonalities and disparities among them. They are interested in receiving innovative contributions that explore various historical and contemporary examples of urban uprisings in Asia. The editors have three primary objectives. Firstly, they aim to focus on the experiences and representations of women who have encountered, witnessed, or participated in urban uprisings across Asian countries since the latter half of the 20th century. Secondly, they intend to investigate similarities and differences in the experiences, representations, and life stories of successful female campaigners, as well as those who were incarcerated or subjected to physical and mental torture as political activists during or after urban uprisings. Thirdly, they aim to examine how women's active participation affects the success or failure of urban uprisings; their role in intensifying government crackdowns; and their contribution towards bringing about transformative changes in society.

The editors welcome chapter proposals that explore topics and concepts related to representations of women's experiences and participation in urban uprisings in Asian countries. Themes for contributions may include, but are not limited to:

1. Women's agency in urban uprisings
2. Gendered violence and resistance in urban uprisings
3. Intersectionality and women's experiences of urban uprisings
4. Women's leadership and participation in urban uprisings
5. Feminist perspectives on urban uprisings in Asia
6. Women's role in shaping the narrative of urban uprisings
7. The impact of urban uprisings on women's lives and livelihoods
8. Women's solidarity and collective action in urban uprisings
9. The role of literature in representing women's experiences of urban uprisings
10. Women's participation in post-uprising reconstruction efforts
11. The impact of state repression on women during urban uprisings
12. The role of religion and culture in shaping women's experiences of urban uprisings
13. Women's experiences of displacement and migration during urban uprisings
14. The intersection between environmental justice and women's participation in urban uprisings
15. The potential for feminist alliances across borders during urban uprisings

16. Foreign (women) role models

17. The importance of the Information communication technology (ICT)

Please submit an abstract of approx. 400 words and a short bio note to **Dr. Ayesha Perveen** at **ayesha@vu.edu.pk** by **15 December 2023** at the latest. Notifications of acceptance can be expected by Dec 30, and complete manuscripts of 6,000-8,000 words will be due by Feb 29, 2024.

## Editors:

**Moussa Pourya Asl**, Affiliate, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oulu, Finland  
Moussa Pourya Asl is an Affiliate at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Oulu. He earned his PhD in English Literature from the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia. His primary research area is in diasporic literature and gender and cultural studies. He has guest edited two special issues on postcolonial and diasporic literature and theory for the journal of *The Wenshan Review*. He has edited two books: *Gender, Place, and Identity of South Asian Women* (2022), and *Urban Poetics and Politics in Contemporary South Asia and the Middle East* (2023). He has published several articles in the above-mentioned areas.

**Henry Oinas-Kukkonen**, Senior Lecturer of History, University of Oulu, Finland

Henry Oinas-Kukkonen is a Senior Lecturer in History and has a title of docent in the History of International Relations and Information Networks at the University of Oulu, Finland. He is one of the principal investigators in the Transcultural Encounters Research Center (TCERC) at the University of Oulu. Oinas-Kukkonen has worked among others on history of the US Occupation of Japan and the American attempts to re-educate their occupation soldiers to meet Japanese women. His current research interests also include the history of information and communication technology, innovation and social web. He has published five monographs including a co-authored title *Humanizing the Web: Change and Social Innovation* (2013).

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Ayesha Perveen, Assistant Professor of English at the Virtual University of Pakistan holds a PhD in English Literature from the University of Management and Technology in Lahore, Pakistan. Specializing in South Asian literature, she has an extensive record of international publications and presentations. Additionally, she serves as a respected reviewer for several prestigious international journals. In her leisure time, she indulges her passion for poetry, with her works featured in notable publications such as *New Writing*, *FemAsia*, *Covid and Poetry Anthology*, and *Down in the Dirt*.

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