

## Feminist Discourses and Multiple Identities: A Postcolonial Representation of Woman in Hyder's *River of Fire*

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### Abstract

*This research paper foregrounds the postcolonial representation of women in Hyder's River of Fire. The novel covers a large span of history. In the entire novel, the female writer presents a lot of women in the backdrop of socio-political and historical backdrop. The western totalizing and Universalist discourses of feminism do not explain well the scope of representation of women in this novel. Even third-world feminism does not suffice here. The research shows that the novelist consciously writes back the colonial and postcolonial feminist representation of women. The analysis highlights that the question of marginalization and subjugation must be seen with multiple factors such as history, society, culture and class. The novel presents multiple identities of women in the historical flux of more than two thousand years.*

### Key Words:

Feminist  
Discourse,  
Multiple  
Identities,  
Postcolonial  
Feminism,  
Third World  
Feminism,  
Western  
Feminism

### Introduction

River of Fire is the magnum opus of Qurratulain Hyder, an Urdu novelist who translated her masterpiece Aag Ka Darya with this title. The novel is broken into four portions of varying lengths, which correspond to the four seasons of the year and the four phases of the Indo-Pak Subcontinent's history. The first section establishes prehistoric India's sociohistorical and cultural picture. The first portion of the novel concludes in Chapter 9, after which the second section begins. The novel's second section begins with a sociocultural portrait of Indo-Islamic civilization and ends in chapter 17. The British Imperialism period begins in Chapter 17 and lasts until Chapter 44, when the subcontinent is partitioned into India and Pakistan. The final section focuses on the post-partition situation. In all

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these parts, the representation of women is a major theme. Hyder very consciously writes back to the feminist discourses of western academia and some of the assumptions of postcolonial feminism.

## **Background**

Western feminist discourses usually look at the problems of the white woman. They produce homogeneous discourses with Eurocentric values. On the contrary, in the postcolonial context, third-world feminism has tried to look at the problem of women of color. The debate is now well established in academia. Postcolonial feminism looks at the problems of the third-world woman in the postcolonial context. Tyagi (2014) opines that the portrayal of women in formerly colonized countries and in western places is the focus of postcolonial feminist theory. While the duty of a postcolonial feminist is significantly more difficult than that of a postcolonial thinker in combating the first colonial discourse that seeks to depict him as inferior. She is a victim of "double colonization," as she is oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy at the same time. Not only as a colonized subject but also as a woman, she must fight colonial power's domination. Her colonized brother is no longer her partner but her oppressor in this oppression. He even exploits her in his fight against the colonizer, distorting her in nationalist discourses. Not only that, but she also suffers at the hands of Western feminists from colonizer countries, who misrepresent their colonized counterparts by enforcing silence on their racial, cultural, social, and political specificities, potentially oppressing their "sisters."

In Mishra's view, postcolonial feminism is a branch of postcolonial feminine research that is still relatively new. In response to mainstream feminism in the West, postcolonial feminism or 'third world feminism' arose. The disparities in class, race, feelings, and situations of women from formerly colonial territories have never been taken into account by Western feminism. Western feminism is scorned by postcolonial feminism because of its complete "eurocentrism." As a result, expecting Western hands to value, appreciate, and justify postcolonial ladies is a mistake. In fact, 'postcolonial feminism' arose from the long-standing Western desire to homogenize and universalize women's experiences. Postcolonial feminism is a positive discourse that aims to find peaceful solutions for all women throughout the world who are disenfranchised. Postcolonial feminists envision a future in which diversity is valued and celebrated. Women's social, cultural, economic, and religious liberties are all important to postcolonial feminists. (Mishra 2013)

In the various contexts of women's lives, subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights, postcolonial feminism investigates and examines the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities. The emphasis is on patriarchy's and colonialism's involvement in this strategy.

However, postcolonial feminism articulates a gender question in relation to race and class in the context of the global population. The major works of postcolonial feminism revolve around themes such as combative and monitory addresses to First World feminists, repudiation of the roles and places routinely assigned to women and feminists in the Third World, the formation of alliances, and the introduction of nuance and complexity into feminism's politics. (Tavassoli & Mirzapour, 2013)

According to Chambers & Watkins (2012), while the historical diversity and local specificity of postcolonialism as a discipline, as well as its ability to accept feminist theory's findings regarding gender and sexuality, are generally acknowledged, distinctions within feminisms are not always recognized in the same manner. This has a lot to do with the current political atmosphere, in which the narrative of "female independence" is increasingly being questioned, both in the West and in the non-West. In this age of austerity, neo-conservatism, and backlash, it's easy to dismiss feminism as a "blanket" solution. Instead, we wish to argue for feminism's historical and geographical uniqueness, as well as its ability to effectively deal with differences. (Chambers & Watkins, 2012)

Hyder's approach towards feminist issues emphasizes the uniqueness of sociopolitical and sociohistorical conditions that the woman of the Indo-Pak subcontinent faces. In her fictional narrative, she has portrayed the woman in this broader context. The analysis of the textual data establishes that the current debates in postcolonial feminist theory and western feminism do not fully appreciate the multiple feminist identities of the woman in the historical and geographical context.

### **Postcolonial Representation of Woman in River of Fire**

Hyder has discursively constructed the identity of the woman in the history of the subcontinent. The four phases of history foreground the plight of men and women from sociopolitical and sociohistorical perspectives. The textual statements and the overall structure of the narrative develop a feminist perspective that neither fits the western feminist discourses nor the third-world feminist issues. In the following pages, the analysis will highlight the unique feminist position of the novelist in the historical frame of the novel.

In the first part of the novel, the identity of the female is constructed through the narrative of the novel. The frame story develops the perspective in which specific statements about female identity are situated. The first nine chapters of the novel cover the story of ancient India. This section focuses on four major characters who belong to the upper class of society: two males and two ladies. Two other female characters also appear in the narrative. One is Sujata, the milkmaid, and the other is Ambika, a courtesan.

Gautam and Hari Shankar are male characters, whereas Champak and Nirmala are female characters. Nirmala is the sister of Hari Shankar, the prince of Kaushal Desh. Hari Shankar is the lover of Champak. Gautam is a Brahmin scholar who is on his way to the Forest University of Shravasti to further his education. Gautam meets Nirmala and Champak while crossing the river Saryu in the stormy month of Bhadon and falls in love with the latter. Gautam meets Hari Shankar, who claims to be a Greek traveller, late at night in a temple near the river. They talk about current philosophical tendencies, Buddhism, the philosophy of meaning and language, and the nature of the self and the god.

The intellectual atmosphere of medieval India is constructed in this dialogue. The political upheaval of the time and the ascent of Chandragupta Maurya are brought into the foreground as the novel progresses, underlining the socio-political changes in the environment. Gautam joins an ashram in Sharavasti where Buddha preached his new religion a hundred and fifty years before when he arrived from Magath. Gautam dreams about Champak on his first night in the ashram. He becomes a Brahmincharia in the ashram and abides by the clan's rigorous norms. He is only twenty-two years old, and as the son of a Shravasti High Priest, he is expected to complete his education and become a priest in a few years. He is, however, skilled in the art of sepulcher, and he has developed new procedures that he wants to use. Gautam has also become a pacifist who adheres to a rigid code of nonviolence.

Hari Shankar pays a surprise visit to the Shravasti Ashram and speaks with Gautam Nilambar. Shankar has converted to Buddhism and has given up worldly love and relationships. He asks Gautam to return Champak his engagement ring. Gautam reluctantly accepts it and approaches Shankar for permission to become a lover of Champak. Meanwhile, Shankar's father, the King of Kaushal Desh, visits Shravasti and engages in riverside activities with his elephant. Champak and Nirmala have also joined the King's entourage. Gautam pays them a visit and eats everything, even meat and drink, which he had previously avoided. The King and his entourage leave before Gautam wakes up the next morning.

The story has focused on the intellectual diversity and political stability of the region up to this point in the first part. In philosophy and religion, there are numerous schools of thought. All of them, however, coexist harmoniously. People have the freedom to select a lifestyle or a metaphysical position. Political instability and unrest, on the other hand, gradually emerge, drastically altering people's lives. Chandragupta Maurya, a Magath native, overthrows the reign of Kaushal Desh. Champak and Nirmala have been detained. Gautam battles valiantly to defend Shravasti from an onslaught. After being gravely injured, he decides to give up his life as a Brahmin scholar. He is rescued by a milkmaid Sujata. He desecrates Champak's sepulture, which he has been preparing for years. The ashram has been completely destroyed. Gautam travels from Shravasti to find Champak. He is a scholar and artist who is unfamiliar with the ways of the world

and hence runs from pillar to pillar. He looks around but can't seem to find his true love. Meanwhile, he joins the theatrical troupe of Ambika, a travelling actress and courtesan. Ambika falls in love with Gautam, who goes on to become the company's head actor. Gautam is transformed into a new man by his life in the theatre company and his love for Ambika. His scholastic contentment and humility are now a footnote in history. During a performance in Pattliputra, Gautam runs across Champak, who knows him right away. Champak's maidservant intends to meet with Champak after the first round of the performance is completed. Gautam declines the meeting since he no longer cares for Champak. Champak and Nirmala were apprehended by the Chadragupta army and transported to Pattliputra, he was told. Champak is forced to join an old mantric's harem.

The frame story clearly establishes a particular perspective of male and female characters. However, there are specific statements in the narrative which relate to feminist themes.

In the first part, there are numerous statements that develop the discourses of female identity in the novel. The theme of a woman waiting for the return of her lover is a consistent and common theme in the entire story. In all four parts, women seem to be waiting for the return of their lover. "*Men who go away on long journeys are awaited anxiously in the rainy season by the women they leave behind. That's what all the rain songs say* (P: 7)." It is however, important to note that this waiting is not presented as subjugation, marginalization or compulsion. It is presented as a cultural behavior of Indian women. Champa is waiting for Hari Shankar. But it is not a social compulsion but love. She was offered the choice to select a husband but she refused. "*She had rejected many a fine suitor and was fast turning into a grumpy old maid. Soon, she may also have no option but to become a sanyasin or even a Buddhist nun* (P: 7)". It means that women have the right to choose a way of life for themselves. The women who do want to enter a marriage contract can become Buddhist nun or 'sanyasin'.

In the contemporary society in medieval India, women were adopting new trends which were disliked by some people in the society. Gautam comes across an old man with a child-wife criticizing the modernist trends.

"All these newfangled notions of equality, no caste, no nothing. And this 'Renounce the World' business is catching on. Even the girls are shaving their silly heads and taking to the woods. This is what happens when you educate the women—they begin to seek nirvana. . . . The old householder's child-wife came out" (P: 7)

This extract shows that women's education is a disputed trend in society. Women are adopting new trends which are unacceptable to conservative minds. But all the same, these new trends are in currency.

Apart from upper-class women who enjoy some freedom, there are two other classes of women. The working-class woman has limited freedom. Sujata, the milkmaid, is such a character. The other class is that of the courtesan. The narrative

introduced courtesans as free women, sometimes envied by upper-class women in some respect. Ambika, the courtesan, is presented as a powerful woman who is subdued only by her passion of love for Gautam. The narrative introduces Ambika as a courtesan in the following words:

She belonged to the courtesan or vaishya caste; her mother and grandmother had been court dancers. The vaishyas were a class apart. Treatises were written for them on how to lure and captivate men. Some were trained as spies and were called vish-kanya or poison-maidens. They were reared on slow poison so that their kisses would be fatal for the enemy. Ambika was an enchantress without being a dangerous vish-kanya. She had also had strenuous training in the performing arts. As a high-class vaishya she was an accomplished entertainer of nagar-seths, warlords and princes. (P: 26)

This description introduces courtesans as a social institution of its own type. The courtesans are acknowledged by society as a class and they have an important role in the social milieu. They represent the performing art and are considered to be social entertainers.

Ambika, as a lover, suffers from ill-treatment of Gautam. The following extract shows the position of Ambika as an Indian lover:

“Despite being a seasoned courtesan and a hard-headed business-woman, Ambika fell in love with him. He became the chief actor and her paramour. He thought he was cast in the mould of heroes. He was very conscious of his power over women and grew vainer by the day (P: 24).

As a lover, Ambika suffers at the hand of Gautam, but this suffering is her own choice. This self-chosen suffering is not a social bond but the bond of passion. Gautam himself feels sorry for her:

He felt sorry for her. Poor girl, she has given me a career. She looks after me and serves me as though I were a prince, not a vagrant, and I taunt her all the time for no reason. She is not responsible for my misfortunes (P: 24)”

This representation of Indian women reflects a particular attitude toward the Indian woman. She loves so ardently and much of her suffering is because of this culturally conditioned emotional makeup.

Another aspect of the identity of the Indian woman is her religious devotion. There are numerous women in society who opt for the ascetic life. They become Nuns. The Buddha cult of ascetic nuns is in vogue. The women shun the flesh and desire and join the ashrams which are made for female. These nuns are called sanyasins (p18) and they have their own cult and rituals. Because of wars and political upheaval a number of women join the ashrams and become sanyasins.

Apart from presenting various roles of Indian women, the narrative presents some theoretical and intellectual discourses about women in India. These discourses reflect a particular attitude of society about women. A woman is seen as a problem that seriously affects the life of warring men, scholars and ascetics. In the dialogue between Shankar and Gautam, the following utterance is made; "A

girl! That always seems to be at the root of all problems,' Gautam agreed (P: 9)." This shows a typical attitude of Indian male who is always attracted by the beauty of a female. In a moment of brooding, Gautam made a statement about the attractiveness of female beauty: "Why did women have such power over men? he wondered. The Buddha had solved that problem too: shun them (p 14)." Apart from this handy solution to the complicated problem, Gautam makes a comprehensive statement about the woman in his interior monologue. This statement sums up the various discourses about the representation of females in the entire narrative.

Life was full of paradoxes. He thought of the sages' contradictory statements about women. Woman could never be pure, she was the root of all evil, she was shallow. Women of good families envied courtesans for their dresses and ornaments. Evil came into existence because of creation. A woman gave birth, so she was the origin of all sin. A woman was hungry for love and therefore, unreliable. And yet, despite her weaknesses, she could be immensely virtuous, faithful and self-sacrificing. She should be respected. She symbolized Shakti.

And there were all those wives who were burnt alive with their dead husbands, and Sakyamuni had told Ananda that women were stupid, jealous and vicious. Therefore his favorite disciple, Ananda, had given up his beloved Sundari. And now Hari Anand had forsaken his Champak. Doesn't stand to reason. What is wrong with women that they should be shunned like lepers? (P: 14)

The underlined expressions this long extract summarizes the attitude of Indian male towards woman. The multiple identities of woman are presented as conceptualized by the male intellectuals of India. There are various mutually exclusive statements. From the status of evil incarnate to goddess women is seen in multiple ways. She suffers the satti ritual in which she is burnt alive and she is worshipped as goddess. These extreme positions are reflected in social behavior towards the woman in the society.

The narrative represents woman in almost all of these roles in long history of India which marks the narrative structure of *River of Fire*. The extract above in fact may be taken as a principle statement about the male attitude towards women which is elaborated in the novel.

In the novel, there is no systematic split of parts. The second portion begins in a dramatic and abrupt manner. Gautam Nilambar drowns in "the violent waves of Saryu" (53) while crossing it at the end of chapter 9. On the other side of the river, we find another individual and a different period in the Subcontinent's history. This is Indo-Islamic culture in medieval India, and "Syed Abul Mansur Kamaluddin" (53) from Baghdad stands on the bank of the Saryu, which flows "majestically in front of him" (54). The river in the title and throughout the narrative represents the unstoppable flow of time, and it is on the shoreline of a riverbank where one period of history ends and another begins.

In this part of the novel, the narrative represents the woman in indo-Islamic culture. The major themes regarding female representation in the Muslim period

are of the political role of royal ladies and the female education in the upper-class woman. The Hindu rituals of being sanyasin, the theme of satti, and the role of courtesans are inherited from history and indigenous culture.

The political role of royal ladies is very much foregrounded in this part of the narrative. The important royal ladies include, Bibi Raji, Bibi Masto, and Bibi Khonza. The political significance and influence are compared in passing reference with 'the mothers of the Sultans of Turkey' (p 33). The political power and role of Muslim women in the upper class is a consistent discourse of the novel in remaining part of the narrative.

An interesting episode of history establishes the role of royal ladies in political matters:

When Mehmud Khan became king, Bibi Raji told him, "If you don't attack Dehli, I will lead the army myself.

That throne belongs to my family. My brother was a fool to quit." So Mehmud laid seige to the capital at the time when Sultan Bahlol was away at Sirhind. Bahlol's aunt, Bibi Masto, was the officer-in-charge of the fort.

A royal woman Bibi Raji motivates an attack on Delhi and the warrior is confronted by Bibi Masto as an 'officer-in-charge of the fort'. The narrative establishes war skills of Bibi Masto as she successfully tackles the situation.

Bibi Raji is also represented as a very astute and skilled person in political matters. 'Bibi Raji was well versed in statecraft. Like the mothers of the Sultans of Turkey she also wielded enormous political power.' She played a vital role as mother in deciding the throne of Jaunpur Syed Dynasty. Bibi Raji was mother of Husain Shah the king of Jaunpur. His wife Bibi Khonza also held political influence. 'She is a niece of Bibi Raji and daughter of Allauddin Alam Shah. She keeps urging Hussain Shah to capture Dehli. (p 34).

Apart from political role of royal women, the intellectual dimension of Muslim woman in royal palace is also foregrounded. 'The Queen Mother is not only an astute politician, she is a learned woman and has had a college and grand mosque built specially for women (p 34).' A royal college for female education was established in Jaunpur. The details of administrative structure and educational goals reflect the preferences of Muslim culture for female education. The description of the royal college which was called 'the Madrassa-i-Niswan' (p 36) is as under:

In her college the faculty consists of pious spinsters of royal blood who are unmarried because men of equal status or lineage could not be found. There are also old and learned war-widows of whom there is no dearth. Young widows remarry in no time. The teachers are called Mullani-ji, or Ato-ji. A few doddering old maulanas from the local colleges come there off and on to deliver their lectures, and the students are mostly daughters of noblemen. (p 34)

The underlined expressions show that the teachers of the college are mostly unmarried old ladies and educated war widows. The learners are the girls from



upper class society. This description shows that woman education is common place in upper class. Love story of Kamaluddin and Ruqqaiya Bano Begum also reflects the intellectuality of royal ladies in the palace.

Outside the royal palace, the Hindu woman is presented in a different perspective. The dialogue between Kamaluddin and Champavati the sister of a pundit reveals another world. The sister of pandit is a simple woman, 'No regal airs, no jewellery, no make-up, no silks and brocades (p 38).' The talk reveals that champavati is a staunch believer in fate. She is even ready to face the fate of sati if it is in her stars. Kamaluddin tells her: "First they'll burn you alive, then they'll worship you as goddess Sati (p 39)." The dialogue also shows that upper class Hindu woman observes purda just like upper class woman. Kamaluddin talks about royal hindu families: 'I have not seen Rajput princesses; they must be different. But they live in purda (p 38).'

The representation of woman in indo-Islamic culture highlights the role of woman in power corridors as well as intellectual affairs. In the third part of the novel which represents the role of women in the wake of British imperialism continues with the theme of political role of woman as well. However in postcolonial perspective some new dimensions are added.

The entrance of European colonizers is dramatically introduced in Chapter xvii, which finishes the story of Indo-Islamic culture in the Subcontinent, which began with Syed Abul Mansur Kamaluddin's arrival in India as a Muslim scholar attempting to make a living. The tragic death of old Kamal at the hands of Sher Shah's armed soldiers brings the story to a close. The story includes a paragraph about Delhi's centuries-old past, emphasizing the glories of the vast Mughal Empire and a global trade network before turning the scene to the Bengali canals, from whence European traders and warriors infiltrated the Subcontinent.

It is the year 1797. Like a fish pond, Bengal is teeming with European traders. One of them is Cyril Ashley. He is a Cambridge graduate who has come to India to earn his fortune with Peter Jackson. Peter Jackson persuaded him to visit India because it is the ideal destination for an intelligent artist and painter. They have arrived in Calcutta and have been appointed as the Governor General's representatives. They went out for Bengal to participate in the festivities hosted by a newly installed Raja. Ashley's senior has urged him not to associate with Indians. He's also been told to stay away from low-caste Indian women. They are greeted warmly when they arrive at the Raja Sahib's Bungalow. Ashley has had a lot of unusual events since she's been here. He meets a girl named Mariya in Calcutta who tells him about her grandfather, an Englishman who immigrated to India and never returned. When Ashley considers his own destiny, he is terrified by this scenario. In Bengal, he is approached by a young man named Kumar, who seeks his assistance. His sister will be burned alive beside her husband, who has already died. This is referred to as satti among Hindus. Ashley wishes to assist the disadvantaged. Raja Sahib tries to persuade Ashley to stay out of this situation, but

Ashley heads to the village and saves the lady. Bakshi Mazumdar's father visits Raja Sahib's residence to express his gratitude.

Bakshi also tells the story of his past, describing how he was abandoned when the Europeans arrived. Bakshi was a teacher, and Raja Sahib was one of his pupils. Because he is in his bungalow in front of two white men, Raja Sahib feels uncomfortable. Bakshi presents Ashley with two books as a gift. Mr. Ashley invites Bakshi's family to Calcutta and offers Kumar a job. Bakshi declines to travel, but his family eventually settles in Calcutta. Kumar begins to work for Messer Jackson and Ashley's firm. Mr. Ashley decides to make Kumar's sister Sujata his *bibi* after seeing her. Ashley and Sujata begin living together, however he is wary of having children of a different race. He still isn't capable of marrying any Miss White after twenty-five years. On behalf of the East India Company's government, he has been active in state affairs and interactions with local *rajās*, *nawābs*, and *nazims*. He frequently travels to Lucknow on government business. He stays there for a night or two with Champa Jan, who is a paragon of beauty and intelligence as well as a wonderful *ghazal* singer. He forgets about his troubles while he is in the company of this courtesan.

Ashley's values have been influenced by India, and he is now an entirely different guy. Gautam Nilambar Dutt, a new employee, has joined the team. Ashley has a lot of faith in him and likes him a lot. Gautam is a mixed breed with excellent English skills. He is sent to Lucknow by Ashley, where he meets Champa Jan. Sujata has requested Gautam's assistance in rescuing her spouse Ashley from Champa Jan. When Gautam delivers her message to Champa Jan, she becomes agitated and makes a dismissive gesture. Gautam is influenced by Lucknow's culture. He begins to eat *paan* while dressed in the Lucknow attire. He also discusses the local culture's intricacy. He tells a local *nawab*, Kamal Raza Bahadur, about Ashley and Champa Jan's case. He considers the colonial narrative about India in his stream of consciousness. He doubts the story of India's previous decadence, believing that this is how Europeans portray India. Mr. Ashley's interest in Sujata has waned. He married Miss White, with whom he has a son named Edwin Ashley. Meanwhile, Ashley receives a letter from Mariya, who claims to be his daughter Eliza's mother. Miss Eliza has joined the Holy Cross Sisterhood. He is concerned by this letter. He sings and drinks extensively. Mr. Ashley passes away at the age of 65.

This part of story highlights feminist themes in a different perspective. First time in the narrative foreign ruler looks at the native with a sense of racial superiority. Ashley relation with Sujata is not that of husband-wife. He keeps her as his mistress. This Sujata reminds us the marriage between Kamaluddin and Sujata where both racial and religious difference does not matter much. The British imperialism is therefore introduced as a different phenomenon from the past invasions.

With Ashley's death, the plot shifts to the story of King Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh. He's a fantastic vocalist and guitarist. His passion for art and literature is well-known. Oudh's people adore their King. Mr. James Outram, a local, advises Wajid Ali Shah to flee Oudh because the city is under military siege. Wajid Ali Shah's mother, Malika Kishwar, decides to travel to London to seek justice against the East India Company. Wajid Ali Shah departs Oudh and arrives in Calcutta via Banaras. His mother embarks on a journey to England. She arrives in England with a large group of servants and family members and urges Queen Victoria to treat them fairly. Back in India, a mutiny has broken out, resulting in Malika Kishwar's lawsuit being dismissed. Malika and his buddies travel to France from England. She dies in France and is buried according to noble custom. During the rebellion, Wajid Ali Shah's wife, Begum Hazrat Mahal, fights heroically against the Europeans. The King of Oudh is being held captive at Matia Burj. Other rajas, nawabs, and sikhs have revolted against the East India Company's control, including Begum Hazrat Mahal. Nawab Kamman tells Gautam Nilambar Dutt, who is now a journalist, the entire tale of the revolt. Gautam approaches him and inquires about Champa Jan. He learns from Nawab Kamman that she has become a beggar. Gautam Dutt travels to Lucknow and meets Champa Jan for the first time. Manoranjan Dutt, his son, is a law professor at Canning College Amin Abad. Mr. Dutt goes across Lucknow and notes how much has changed. His son is married and resides in Singhrewali Kothi with his wife and children.

The second part of the story of British imperialism revolves round events of 1857. The British called it mutiny while the local community named it war of independence. In this part of the story the role of Malika Kiswar and Hazrat Mahal reminds us the political significance of woman in Muslim Royalty.

In fourth part of the novel events before the partition and after partition are narrated. In this part the life of upper class of Hindu and Muslim Nawabs is represented. The representation of woman in this part is worth attention. The educated Muslim and Hindu young woman are presented. In the backdrop the political role of Muslim and Hindu women is also mentioned. The women are actively participating in the movement of independence. They active participate in political debates.

At this time in the story, a new group of young men and women is introduced: Kamal, Aamir Raza, Tehmina, and Talat. Tehmina and Talat are sisters, and Kamal is the brother of Tehmina and Talat. Aamir Raza joined the Royal Indian Navy after graduating from Canning College. Talat is a Hindustani music student at Marris College. Tehmina has completed her master's degree and is currently dating Aamir Raza. Kamal is a university student who studies under Hari Shankar. Lajwati, Hari Shankar's older sister, was married in 1943 and moved to Dehli. Champa, a Banaras native, enrolled in Isabella Thoburn College in 1941 to pursue her B.A. She is from a lowly background, and when she visits Lukhnow, she attends the aforementioned gathering of young boys and girls. Champa piques

Aamir Raza's interest. Champa is looking for a way into this upper-class society. She gives Aamir Raza a nice response. Their affair gradually becomes public knowledge. It leads to the breakup of Aamir and Tehmina's engagement. These people see each other on a regular basis. Their families wish for them to be successful in life. They are all enrolled in missionary and modern educational institutions. Their culture is a mix of several cultures. This upper-class society is experiencing a surge of female freedom. Their identities have been utterly transformed by colonial teaching. Their mental and emotional states have completely diverged from those of other individuals.

The decade of 1940 is known as the "Pakistan Movement." In all circles of Indian society, a discussion is raging. In 1943, Kamal travels to Calcutta for hunger assistance. On Lajwati's parents' request, he meets Gautam there. Gautam is to marry Nirmla, according to them. Sir Deep Narain Nilambar's son is Gautam. He has an artistic bent to his intellect. Gautam pays a visit to Kamal and his family's home in Gulfishan. The young members of this elite clan culture are all burdened by the passage of time. They seem to be a depressed generation. They had become engrossed with the sufferings of time. Champa sympathises with the Pakistani revolution. Her coworkers are critical of her for this. Syed Taqi Raza, Kamal's father, has joined the Muslim League. Because Congress is anti-land lords, Kamal believes his father supports Muslim League. Champa and Aamir Raza's romance has ended because Champa does not want to jeopardize her freedom. Gautam piques Champa's attention.

Mr. Aamir leaves India and resides in Karachi when Pakistan is established. Gautam is now a diplomat in India. Talat is now a London-based journalist, and Tehmina has also relocated to the capital. Champa begins a connection with Cyril Ashely, the grandson of the Cyril Ashely described earlier in the story. Ashely is researching the East India Company's governance issues in India. Tehmina becomes unwell and passes away in London. Champa eventually says no to Ashely's marriage proposal. Hari Shanker has also travelled to America. Aamir Raza is in London on a diplomatic trip. In London, he meets Roshan Ara Kazmi from Lahore. Their relationship blossoms quickly, but Aamir Raza is unable to marry Miss Kazmi. She returns to Pakistan and marries a government official. Talat is employed by a publication. For the publication, she conducts interviews with a number of well-known people. Champa returns to India and takes up residence with his uncle's family. Gautam tries to persuade Nirmala to marry him, but she questions his love for Champa. As a result, she repeatedly rejects his offer. Meanwhile, the London Mujlis put on a variety show to collect money for Bengali poet Qazi Nazrul Islam, who died recently.

In the partition scene, the women are presented as equal participants in education and social activities. Even they go to Europe for their career and settle there. They participate in intellectual as well as literary activities. They form a Diaspora there and enjoy their identity as independent woman.

## **Conclusion**

The discussion of data shows that Hyder has consciously responded to the feminist discourses of western feminism and third world feminism. She does not present woman as marginalized and oppressed gender. In her view woman belonging to different social strata enjoy a limited freedom within the set boundaries of culture. However there is discursive marginalization of the woman at various levels.

From the earliest period of history, in India woman has been presented both negatively and positively. In the real life woman performs her role according to her social status. Upper class woman enjoys fairly more freedom. She gets education, joins social space and opts for her social and religious role. In ancient India woman could opt her spouse, join an ashram, get education and occupy social space. At the same time she was victim of Sati and could be burnt alive with her husband. In laity woman opted profession. She could be a milkmaid, a field worker and a courtesan as performing artist.

In Muslim era she enjoyed political power, got education, and occupied social space within the cultural limits. The Hindu woman in this era survived in the cultural tradition with a well defined freedom and limitations. The role of royal ladies in political affairs shows the position of woman in power corridors. In this era the sati persisted as a tradition.

In period of British colonization and during the independence movement the role Indian woman continues to be significant in terms of social, political and other activities. In resistance against British imperialism the heroic fight of Hazrat Mahal, and the role of woman in independence movements does give the impression of marginalization and subjugation. However, Hyder does not mitigate the sufferings of woman. She presents the dilemma of female in the backdrop of sociocultural and sociohistorical perspective. In Hyder's view both men and women suffer at the hands of torrents of time. The setting of novel in four parts is that of transition period. The life of men and women is deeply affected by the transition and change. The sociopolitical and sociohistorical realities destroy the life of both men and women. However, in the narrative there is no impression of systematic oppression and marginalization. On the contrary, sufferings are associated with class, social position, historical situation and gender all taken together. Both men and women are oppressed by the torrents of history.

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