

## Postcolonial Feminism and Pakistani Fiction

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims to investigate the presence of feminism in Pakistani fiction in the postcolonial perspective and attempts to glocalize the feministic trends available in Pakistani fiction in terms of the wider scenario of feminism in the world. The women's portrayal in Pakistani fiction shows a remarkable feministic tendency of the writers in accordance with the changing times in Indo-Pak subcontinent under the influence of British colonialism in India. The first change in the portrayal of women came because of the reformist agenda of the Indian Muslims and the second major development took place because of the Progressive Writers Movement, which provided a basis for the new images of women created by the modern Pakistani diaspora writers. Therefore, most of the issues discussed by the Pakistani writers of fiction can be discussed and analyzed with reference to the theory of postcolonial feminism. The paper deals with the differences between Western feminism and postcolonial feminism in the light of views of postcolonial critics regarding various aspects of postcolonial feminism. With reference to this discussion, an endeavor will be made to explore postcolonial feminist fiction to assess the role of fiction writers in representing the issues of women in the context of Pakistani political situation.*

### **Introduction**

Pakistani women have to struggle against their double colonization because of the particular politico-religious system which is hidden but working very actively behind the social system of Pakistan. It is very important to know that freedom from oppressive social system is not easy for the women of Pakistan even if they have achieved a certain level of education and economic independence. Firstly, because the destiny of women in Pakistan is embroiled with the religious and political ideology of Pakistan and secondly, the ideology of legal

equality of women is crushed mostly by the dictators, which makes the women struggle against this politico-religious system in Pakistan made and developed by the dictators in the name of Islam. Whenever and whoever tried to legalize his illegal rule in Pakistan in the name of Islamization of the society, women were first to be victimized because of the laws like *Hadood* ordinance and *Zina* generated out of this politico-religious system. These and many other laws of this system proved detrimental for progress of women and curtailed their freedom and independence. The struggle of women in Pakistan is also the struggle against the dictatorial tendencies of the social setup. For example, Fatima Jinnah had to struggle against the dictatorial regime of Ayoob Khan in the 1960s and Benazir Bhutto against the regime of Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s. We need to see how Pakistani fiction represents issues of women in the context of the struggle of women against the politico-religious system of Pakistan. Feminism is one of the themes employed by the writers of Pakistani fiction. It is mistakenly believed that the 'feminist' movement gained a new momentum in Pakistani English fiction under the political influence of the West. It is, in many ways, a continuation of the long standing feminist movement in Urdu.

### **Feminism in Indo-Pak Subcontinent Literature**

At the advent of British colonialism, the feminist trends of English literature influenced the indigenous literature and changed it from its traditional pattern and structure by complicating the representation of the issues of women. But feminism in the Indian subcontinent, during the pre-colonial and colonial era, has been different because of the specific social structure and specific role of women as compared with the feminism in the west. "The social and educational reform movement in the Indo-Pak subcontinent further changed it into a different form of feminism, resulting mostly because of the nationalist movement" (Perron 2007). Loomba (1998) also supports this point of view when she says that the major working forces behind this difference are the socio-cultural differences in Indo-Pak subcontinent, which differentiate feminism in the Indian subcontinent from the Western feminism. It was largely a reaction against the hegemonic cultural denominators of the British imperialism in India. "In fact,

Anti-colonial or feminist struggle(s) emphasized culture as a site of conflict between the oppressors and the op-pressed” (Loomba 1998). The same holds good for the feminist trends in the colonized states like India and Pakistan.

Also, because western feminism is determined on the basis of the idea that an individual is born free and can determine his or her identity as an individual only, while in the Indo-Pak subcontinent the individual becomes a part of the whole as soon as she is born. Therefore, the scholars, like Perron (2007), in this area, tend to define feminism in terms of time and space they work in. They think that women in Indo-Pak subcontinent have to go through many of the social constructs like status, relations with family, marriage, dowry, caste, community etc. Not only this, women also became a part of the political process, especially because of British colonization of India. One best example is the participation of women in the political process especially after the 1920s because of movements of nationalism resulting in the establishment of women organizations such as All India Women's Conference (AIWC)<sup>i</sup> and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)<sup>ii</sup>. These nationalist freedom movements raised the consciousness of women about their rights and roles in the society. After the independence, the level of this consciousness was further raised because of the establishment of democracies in India and newly established state of Pakistan. According to Ashcroft (2002) also, “Literature written during the colonial and postcolonial era is termed as postcolonial literature which consists of a body of writings emanating from Europe’s former colonies, like Indo-Pak subcontinent. It addresses the concerns of history, identity, ethnicity, gender, and language” (Ashcroft et al 2002).

Omar (2008) also agreed with Ashcroft when he quoted Nabaneeta Dev Sen pointing out that “writers like Rhys, Desai, Emecheta, Senior, Gordimer, Nichols and Roy have placed women at the center of history, as makers and agents of history, not mute witnesses to it” (Omar 2008). It is because of such developments that

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<sup>i</sup> AIWC was founded in 1927 to function as an organization dedicated to the upliftment and betterment of women and children.

<sup>ii</sup> National Federation of Indian Women is the women's wing of Communist Party of India. It was established in 1954 by several leaders including Aruna Asaf Ali.

all across the world, especially in the Indian sub-continent, the act of writing for a woman became essentially an act of breaking her silence because her repressive patriarchal/racial society has taught her to be culturally silent. This argument shows that feminism has essentially been the marginalized consciousness that operates on the periphery of patriarchal discourse. The same Indian feminism and the motivating forces have been inherited by Pakistan and, therefore, the basis, situations, motives, and the future of feminism in Pakistan is also the similar to that of India, which differentiates it from the western one. Postcolonial feminism with its implications on literature represents women in particular political context in Pakistan. Ali thinks that “feminism in this context, can be defined as the awareness of the constraints placed upon women because of their gender system involving new roles for women and new relations between women and men” (Ali 2000). Therefore, the impact of feminist movement in the Indo-Pak subcontinent can be understood in the cultural context of colonialism and the concerns of the social reformers.

The reformers like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan<sup>iii</sup> visualized that the emancipation of their society depended largely on the advancement of women’s education and self-awareness. Another factor, coupled with it in accelerating the efforts of Indian intelligentsia, was that the colonial critics of the Indian backwardness based their opinion on the backwardness of Indian women. So, they believed that “a better change in the status of women was actually a broader social change towards development and progress” (Ali 2000). The strategy adopted by the intellectual elites in South Asia was to ameliorate the status of women in Indo-Pak subcontinent through their writings not according to the standards of the West, but according to the standards they generated for themselves in response to the Western colonialism in India within their own Indian cultural framework. However, it would be very appropriate to have a look at the Western feminism with its various shades and hues in order to determine its relationship with the feminism in Pakistan and India and see critically as to how postcolonial feminist approach would be useful for the analysis of Pakistani feminist fiction.

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<sup>iii</sup> Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) was one of the great reformers of 19<sup>th</sup> century India. He is especially, known for his educational reforms and Aligarh movement in the socio-political scenario of Muslim India.

### **The Origin of Feminism in Europe**

According to Stone (2004), feminism is a diverse collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies, which deal with the historical developments in feminism and some critique the current social constructs. But the common thread is that all of these focus on the analysis of gender inequality and defend women's rights and preserve their interest. Stone (2004) also believes that feminist theories deal with the nature of gender inequalities and discuss gender roles and experiences in the societies, and also focus on the issues of women such as domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence, equal opportunities and pay. While studying and analyzing these issues of feminism the "common emerging themes are patriarchy, stereotyping, objectification, and oppression on women" (Stone 2004). Feminism is also concerned with socio-economic and political inequality between men and women. In broader terms, we can say that feminism basically aims at the equality of sexes with regard to the social, political, and economic aspects.

Modern feminism started with the works of women such as Lady Montagu who championed the universal education for women. The regular start of the feminist movement was initiated when first women's rights convention was held at Seneca Falls in 1848. This movement gained further grounds because of the works of John Stuart Mill who published *The Subjection of Women* (1869). Mill demonstrated in this work that "legal subordination of one sex by the other was wrong and if anywhere this practice was going on, it was the biggest hindrance to the progress of humankind" (Mill 1869). It may be added that the term feminism was connected with the women right's movements in the USA in 1840s when "Seneca Falls Convention resulted in the claims for the women's liberty and equality, followed by the establishment of National Women's suffrage by Stanton and Anthony" (Freedman 2002). At the same time women like Mary Wollstonecraft had been writing for the cause of feminism. She, in 1792, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and in France, women, such as Olympe deGouges, were fighting for the extension of women's rights promised by the French Revolution. In this way, during the nineteenth century, voices were raised for the uplift of the social status of women. According to Ali, this

development gave birth to a new attitude to the value and role of women in the society (Ali 2000). Freedman (2002) believes that although it is very difficult to define feminism in one frame of work but the common basis of any definition may start with the assertion that feminists are concerned with the inferior position of women in a society and that discrimination encountered by women is because of her sex. But almost all the “feminists call for changes in the social, political or cultural order that will move ahead to change the position of women from the society” (Freedman 2002).

### **Three Waves of Feminism**

The feminist scholars like Walker and Humm divide feminism under the headings like The First wave; The Second Wave; The Third Wave. “The First wave begins in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and ends in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second wave of feminist movement lasted from 1960 to 1970 and the Third wave of Feminism emerged in 1990s” (Khara 2010). The first wave of feminism refers mostly to the sufferings and losses of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this wave of feminism the promotion of property rights for women was advocated. It was also emphasized by the advocates of feminism that wives at home should not be considered the properties of their husbands. The second wave of feminist movement also included the issues of equality and removal of discrimination against women. The slogan “The Personal is Political” by Carol Hanisch, became the descriptive statement of the second wave of feminism. Beauvoir (1949/1974<sup>iv</sup>) who advocated the cause of women by writing fiction and non-fiction in her feminist treatise, *The Second Sex* (1949/1974), believed in the feminist existentialism that one is not born a woman but becomes one. On the other hand, Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* (1964) criticized the idea that women could find happiness and satisfaction if they would only become mothers and house-wives.

The third wave of feminism is comparatively a recent phenomenon because it was just ignited in 1990s, as a result of the perceived failures of the second wave. It is mainly based on the post-structuralists’ interpretation of feminism and hence, debates all that is

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<sup>iv</sup> The year 1974 is the year of publication in English translation.

not good for women. This wave allowed many feminists, from different parts of the world, to take a due share in the feminist movement. For example, black feminists like, hooks, lorde and Kingston, and many from south Asia like Spivak and Mohanty, resulting in the development of many types of feminisms in the world depending on the time and space to which it belonged.

### **Postcolonial Feminism**

The critics of postcolonial feminism, like Freedman (2002), believe that the dominance of the western white community during the first and second wave of feminism has tended to create and universalize the model of feminism which, however, does not work because of the variety of women's existence and their problems especially that of third world women who have a very different world of their own constructed because of their local culture and the impact of colonialism on them. Therefore, the representations of women should be evaluated also on the basis of their local culture. And the impact of colonialism on them and feminist trends, which they have, must also be taken into consideration, as is suggested by Jayawardena that "feminism has endogenous roots in the third world and it should not be taken just as ideology imposed by the west but also as a local phenomenon as long as was European feminism" (Jayawardena quoted in Freedman 2002).

The Postcolonial feminist critics, like Morton (2000), believe that oppression on women was doubled because women were even more marginalized as a result of colonization of their countries by the European powers. Postcolonial feminists also object to the portrayals of women by the western writers as passive and uneducated in comparison to the educated and independent women of the west. The colonialists targeted the local cultures to undermine it and hence women in the traditional cultural roles were undermined as well. This undermining resulted in the rebellious attitude in the women of the postcolonial states. The male dominated cultures tried to kill this rebelliousness and as a result women of the colonies had to wage a double struggle, and so was the task of the postcolonial feminists. "The postcolonial feminists don't follow the western forms of radical and liberal feminism and reject the universalization of the

both” (Morton 2000). They believe that the impact of colonialism was different in different areas of the world and hence gender oppression, because of this, should be seen in the local context rather than in the western one. Moreover, colonial oppression had also resulted in the glorification of the local or pre-colonial cultures which surely defined power structure in gender inequality. The names like Mohanty and Sahoo are significant in this regard who believe that the western feminism does not take into account the local experiences of women and tends to universalize their western experiences on women of the third world. The socio-cultural forces in any society also play a major role in the development of personalities of women. “An inferior position is automatically assigned to them because of the roles and the modes of behavior assigned to women” (Freedman 2002) in their local cultures.

It is evident that limiting feminism in terms of area or time is not possible and, therefore, modern feminist theory bears the blame that it vindicates the impressions of the western European academia which needs to be re-addressed. “Feminist activists now believe that feminism seeks to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture and religion and that it is culture specific and addresses issues of women in that very culture” (Stone 2004). As far as feminism in the West is concerned, it seems to have achieved its goals: equality of fundamental rights for women, entry of women into the traditionally male dominated fields of life. Many of the barriers for women faced in the past are now over in the western countries. According to Saul (2003), it may be true but in the non-western parts of the world the situation is still pretty same. “The battle almost won in the western countries, is still to tell its toll and bring change in the lives of women” (Saul 2003). One of the fundamental problems of women in the non-western countries is the gender disparity. Women, because of their restricted role in the society, are considered inferior in these societies and still awareness is to be brought to such countries that women’s restricted roles, even if accepted, do not deprive them of their fundamental rights like, right to vote, to education, to use their bodies, and to make a choice of profession for them. But these concepts about the inferiority of women make them domestic servants of their husbands who would like to treat them like slaves. Saul (2003)



believes that many women have so far been accepting this role and position in the postcolonial cultures like India and Pakistan. But the process of colonization and decolonization and globalization has made the women think about and challenge their status which they had so far been forced to accept. Now, they believe that “their status has been that of a subjugated, colonized, and subservient because of the social upbringing process and procedure” (Saul 2003), and needs to be revolutionized.

### **Postcolonial Theory and Feminism**

Postcolonial literary theory “particularly aims at discovering the answer and knowing the question as to how the colonizer’s literature influenced the colonized people and how it was able to distort various deep rooted realities and cultures of the colonized and how it instilled the inferiority complexes in the literatures of the colonized” (Barnasconi 2010). It also focuses on the efforts of the writers of the colonized countries to re-establish their lost identities. It also enunciates the difficulties of the colonized writers in discovering their own identity and cultures from ‘otherness’<sup>v</sup> of their past. It analyzes the way in which language, tradition, images, and various scenes of the colonized countries are exploited by the colonizing countries. The writers from the British colonies, colonizer or colonized, both portrayed local culture and landscape. Many of them portrayed women and their problems in this literature and gave it a feminist dimension. In consequence, postcolonial literature became an advocate of feminism in terms of glocalization. This study is also an attempt to rediscover the feministic trends of Pakistani fiction in English produced during the postcolonial period. The postcolonial theorists and critics, like Spivak (1987), have pointed out that because of the studies of colonial discourses, like *Orientalism* (1978) of Said; it has become possible for the ‘Marginal’ and the ‘Other’ also to speak. Similarly Mohanty (1991) also points out that colonialism and the forces associated with it have constructed the concept of ‘The Third World Women’ as separate entities and feminism may also be analyzed in their special context. As Ashcroft et al have pointed out in

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<sup>v</sup> A term developed by postcolonial critics to denote the non-white locals in the colonies and for the marginalized ones.

the book *The Empire Writes Back* (2002) that “Generally speaking ... the term colonial has been used for the period before independence and a term indicating a national writing, such as modern Canadian writing or recent West Indian literature has been employed to distinguish the period after independence”.

Feminist discourse and postcolonial studies share many things common like the struggle against oppression and injustice against the powerful authority. These two share their political nature as well and, as a result, these have been taught mostly in association with each other. Both reject the hierarchical and patriarchal supremacy and masculine power. Imperialism is also phalocentric and, hence, seeks to dominate the subjects. In the same way, if any patriarchal power seeks to dominate women in such a culture, they become subjects and hence lose all their rights to equality. If postcolonialism reacts against colonialism in political and economic sense, feminism is also a reaction against colonialism in sexual sense. This common thread links these fields together and, hence, feminism becomes an associated part of postcolonialism. Moreover, the process of colonialism brought awareness to women and raised sense of preservation of the indigenous culture. This awareness clashed directly with the efforts of patriarchal systems. This also makes feminist studies a part of postcolonialism, especially in those parts of world where colonialism existed in its full fury and later on, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it decolonized.

Postcolonialism and feminism also came close to each other because many critics of feminism and postcolonialism, like Carbey, Suleri and Mohanty, object to the western form of feminism basing their claim on the belief that it is mostly Euro-centric and bourgeois in nature and so is unable to cover the feministic issue of all the women of the world, which typifies that all women are a homogeneous group. These critics believe that this tendency in western form of feminism needs to be re-considered because it is damaging the feministic cause of the women in the former British colonies like India, and Africa. Moreover, the feminists have also been wary of the homogeneity assigned to all colonial subjects by the critics of postcolonialism because men and women were effected differently—women being doubly colonized by the process of colonialism and, moreover, the

sufferings of women because of colonialism are different in different parts of world; so postcolonial feminism has to be area specific. Until and unless the sufferings of women are seen in this context, an exhaustive examination of the colonialism and postcolonialism can't be achieved, as is believed by Spivak (1987). Therefore, feminism and postcolonialism should be studied in association with each other.

### **Pakistani Postcolonial Feminist Fiction**

Young (2005) says about postcolonial feminist theory that "Postcolonial feminism has never operated as a separate entity from postcolonialism; rather it has directly inspired the forms and the force of postcolonial politics. Where its feminist focus is fore-grounded, it comprises non-western feminisms which negotiate the political demands of Nationalism, Socialist-feminism, Liberalism, and Eco-feminism, alongside the social challenge of everyday patriarchy, typically supported by its institutional and legal discrimination: of domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape, honour killings, dowry deaths, female feticide, child abuse. Feminism in a postcolonial frame begins with the situation of the ordinary women in a particular place, while also thinking her situation through relation to broader issues to give the more powerful basis of collectivity. It will highlight the degree to which women are still working against a colonial legacy that was itself powerfully patriarchal—institutional, economic, political, and ideological" (Young 2005).

Young's opinion reveals that postcolonial literature is multidimensional and feminism may be studied as a part of postcolonialism. The significance of the postcolonial movement has inspired so many writers to write on or about the postcolonialism in literature. It is due to enormous and diverse amount of literature on the subject that it is very formidable task even to take a rough review of the movement and its theoretical assumptions because there are so many leading theorists and writers and critics who have contributed much to the postcolonial feminism. It is, however, possible to see it with reference to feminist literary criticism which took its shape because of the feminist works of women writers of 19<sup>th</sup> century like, Eliot and Fuller. The works of such writers are mostly about the themes of the politics of authorship of women and their portrayal and

representation in literature. “But in the later periods, feminist literary criticism has included in it the Gender Studies also because of the psychoanalytical and deconstructive criticism of Lacan and Freud” (Young 2005). On the whole, it can be said that the main concern of the feminist literary criticism has been mostly with the representation and the politics of women’s lives in fiction. Generally, the feminist critics believe that feminist literary theory basis itself mainly on the following points:

1. Development of the traditions of female writings.
2. Interpreting women's writing to save it from being lost or ignored.
3. Analysis of women writings from a female point of view.
4. Resisting sexism in literature.
5. Increasing awareness of the sexual politics based on language and style.

Feminism can be discussed under the following basic categories: first, according to Woolf (1929), women could not write successfully mostly because of their financial dependence on men and the social hindrances on their way to free movement. These constraints have made literary activity of women more difficult than their own problems. If women are given financial and social freedom, they can also write as they wish. Second, social equality of men and women would surely empower women and enable them to write literature in their own way. This aspect of feminism initiated criticism on the stereotyping of women in the narratives by males. Third, a group of French feminists believe that a higher degree of radical approach should be used by the women writers and that they may segregate from the masculine style of writing by re-inventing language and writing style. The tendencies of the Western writers, in this regard, made them see themselves as the models for the feminist movements of the entire world, while “the women living in the third-world countries have their own problems and they struggle to assuage them” (Mohanty 1991). But their struggle has been most of the time invisible to the West. However, in the recent years, some of the third-world feminists, like Suleri, Emecheta, Aslam, Mukharji and others were able to articulate themselves in the West because they had migrated and had settled in these countries.

The Third-World women are mostly under the control of men because of the social systems that has been designed by them. Mohanty (1991) believes that the third world women are subjects to socio-cultural systems of the society they live in. However, critics of the postcolonial feminism take these studies a little further and believe that women were marginalized already and the effects of colonialism further expanded this process because of their experiences of racism, class system, and ethnic oppression (Mohanty 1991). But the case may not be altogether the same about all the countries because women were already under the oppression of customs and traditions in their local cultures. Colonialism in certain places has helped in pointing out this oppression which existed in the colonized societies for a long time, for example, “women in India were already suffering from lack of education and strict and undue religious and social control on them” (Mohanty 1991).

Before the advent of the British colonizers in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, the above referred type of feminism was already available in the social structure of Indo-Pak subcontinent. The women were considered accomplished if they were good domestic managers. The British brought awareness, modern scientific knowledge, and sense of individualism. This resulted in social and domestic conflicts for the women of this area. Their demand of equal rights and individualism gave birth to feminism which was further enhanced because of the participation of women in political movements for the freedom of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. This is the very reason that the third world feminism is often related to the postcolonialism, as Young (2005) has also pointed out that: “In the postcolonial state, postcolonial feminism begins from the perception that its politics are framed by the active legacies of colonialism” (Young 2005).

Many theorists and critics of postcolonial feminism, like Spivak (1988) have raised the issue of ‘voice’. Similarly Narayan (1997) also agrees that third world feminism resulted as a response to the indigenous issues of the third world countries. She believes that the issues of feminism are deeply and profoundly related to the local Indian problems like dowry and murder of the daughter-in-law. She, further, asserts that rape of women, poverty, and health and reproduction problems are responsible for the regeneration of

feminism in India. Third-world feminism is not just an imitation of the western feminist agenda rather it is more a response to the problems that the Indian women have been facing (Narayan 1997).

Thus, postcolonial feminism becomes the study of the sufferings of women mainly because of the misuse of local customs, traditions, culture, and religion. Young (2005) also supports this point of view by saying that “postcolonial feminism is certainly concerned to analyze the nervous conditions of being a woman in a postcolonial environment, whether in the social oppression of the post-colony or the metropolis. Its concern is not in the first place with individual problems but with those that affect the whole communities” (Young 2005).

The British colonialism influenced the life and status of the Indian women, mainly through education which influenced the lives of the other women in general, and the writers in particular. So, a plethora of literature was produced which created a new thought in the minds of the women of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. This coupled with the already available feminist trends in the fiction of the subcontinent, took turn in favour of women to protect them from the unjustified laws, notion and social customs. These customs and unjustified laws included the religious custom of *sati*<sup>vi</sup> and the right of woman to inherit and enjoy the ownership of the property. One of the essential consequences of the freedom movement in the Indo-Pak subcontinent was the freedom of women from many unnecessary social taboos and grant of rights for them. Although all this was happening at an upper stratum of life yet, paradoxically, colonial ideology could represent new forms of freedom for women. Young (2005) believes that, “as a result, women were much more ambivalently placed both in relation to colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism” (Young 2005). Besides, the independence movements and the European laws brought some modern-ness. The traditional concept about women, that she lived inside the rooms and was the sole custodian of traditions and culture, also started to undergo a change. All these changes were resisted on many grounds because it was believed that the custodianship of the values will end up if the women modernized, as Young points out that

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<sup>vi</sup> A Hindu religious custom in which a wife is required to immolate herself on the burning pyre of her dead husband.

“women and modernity came to be regarded as antithetical entities, with the result that the goal of national emancipation involved a whole betrayal of all prospects of progressive change for women” (Young 2005). The same struggle of women and the same resistance of men continues even today, rather it is exercised in the postcolonial age in Pakistan more vigorously because the energy, spirit and momentum of freedom movement exists no more.

Young (2005) believes that in many states, after the bulk of energy had been dedicated to achieving national sovereignty, at independence women’s objective had to be re-asserted and second liberation struggle began. The Pakistani women have also faced the similar type of situation after the establishment of Pakistan. The fiction writers witnessed this change and tried to defend this freedom by making the independent women as their models. They also articulated the sufferings of the women who had not yet found any benefits of the new independence of women and were still being put aside as not-so-significant partners of life under the social pressure of circumstances of traditions and customs. This postcolonial feminism is, in the context of Pakistan, the name of women’s experiences in the newly independent countries like Pakistan.

After the partition, the writers of Pakistan or Pakistani origin, like Sidhwa, Suleri Koreishi, Hussein, Kamila, Abbasi, Ghose, Shamsie, and Aslam have portrayed this social change and have made it more specific to the socio-cultural needs of the Pakistani society. The Pakistani women face the issues of legal inequality, lack of education, healthcare and employment opportunities, domestic violence, rape, exploitation of young women because of the customs like *Karo-Kari*, absence of right of choice for job and marriage, forced observation of *Purdah* and confinement within the four walls, economic exploitation of women, poverty and an oppressive social system based on the particular politico-religious agenda. The Pakistani writers have highlighted these issues of the women of Pakistan. They have done so through the development of portrayal of women in their fiction. The most acclaimed novel of Ali, *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) highlights the absence of the right to choose one’s life partner and the lack of modern education. He also refers to the issue of silence of women. Shahnawaz’s novel, *The Heart Divided* (1957) points out to

the struggle of women in the Pakistan movement with struggle of women against the tradition of *Purdah*. This novel also brings inter-racial disharmony among different sections of society which does not allow the right of choice of marriage. Hameedullah (1958), in her short stories, points out to the subservient social construct of women which is followed by most of the women willingly or unwillingly. Ghose's novel *Murder of Aziz Khan* (1967) brings before us the women characters who were obsessed with the show of wealth and possession. He also points out the social and physical exploitation of women by the rich. On the other hand, Sidhwa (1983) has portrayed women more active in their homes and outside. Sidhwa's women characters can voice their cause and can gain what they want. But she has also lamented the condition of the women who suffer because of the cultural and religious taboos in Pakistan. Her major novels are: *The Bride* (1983), *An American Brat* (1994), and *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988). She has focused the development of rebellious and struggling women against the anti-women social norms of the society. Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1989) discusses the Pakistani women who have been constantly facing the loss of their individual identity and existence. Suleri (1989) challenges the existing social norms about women. Hamid, another modern day Pakistani novelist, has produced, *Moth Smoke* (2000), which tells us about the lives of the rich and well-to-do men and women along with their complex psychologies and their reactions to different social circumstances. He points out the issue of confinement of women and consequent rebellion of women. A similar version is available with Khan, in her novel, *The Story of the Nobel Rot* (2001) which focuses on the portrayal of women. Khan points out the economic exploitation of the poor and as a result development of the rebellious woman who uses every tactic to gain her right. The young modern writers, like Shahraz (2001) and Shamsie (2002), have not let the opportunity to portray the status of women in Pakistan slip out of their hands. Shahraz highlights the issue of the inheritance of property by women. She also challenges the myth of holy women in the interior of Pakistani province of Sindh. Shamsie, through her fiction discusses the issues of lack of social identity of women. She also portrays difficulties of women because of the socio-political system of Pakistan. Hussien (2000) is also significant because he highlights the



issue of polygamy and prostitution forced on women. Short fiction by Abbasi (2001) discusses the lives of the poor women who have to face a hard struggle of life and domestic abuse. She points out the exploitation of the labour of women in the name of false love. Aslam, a modern writer of Pakistani fiction, has given a very touching portrayal of Pakistani women who live physically in England but mentally and psychologically in their homeland. He has produced two novels, *The Season of Rain Birds* (1993) and *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) but the latter is more important because it has a vivid description of his views about Pakistani women in England and has portrayed their existence in homeland as well. He takes up the issue of rape and *Talaq* and *Hallala* being faced by the women of Pakistan. The book *And the World Changed* (2005) edited by Shamsie is another work from Pakistani writers who have focused on various issues of women in and outside Pakistan which has questioned the rape, individual identity and right of choice of marriage of women.

Pakistan writers have attempted to discover their own persons and to establish their will, vision, and goals through cinema, literature and other creative forms. But in Pakistan their efforts have been thwarted repeatedly because the society has particular paradigmatic structure about the role of women and, most of the time, it is not ready to come out of its cocoons. Women are assigned specific roles: mostly as nurturers, and very little as breadwinners. "Women are put into stereotype frame work even in the programs that are run to empower women" (Shamsie 2007). Feministic trends in Pakistani fiction are therefore culture specific and have to be seen in the context of Pakistani socio-political set up which has its own taboos against women. The issues of freedom of choice in marriage, wearing of a specific dress code, right to get education and work, and taking up the responsibilities of home-making alone are the culture specific issues of women in Pakistan. So, the representation of women in Pakistani fiction should be evaluated with reference to postcolonial feminism.

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