

Indo-Pak Freedom Movement and Women's Agency in Mumtaz Shah Nawaz's *The Heart Divided*

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Abstract

The paper celebrates Muslim and Hindu women's agency by highlighting their radical struggle for the freedom movement of the Indo-Pak Subcontinent as presented in Mumtaz Shah Nawaz's (1912-1948) novel The Heart Divided (1957). For this study, agency has been studied as a non-sovereign, intersubjective but potent concept as delineated by Sharon Krause's in her book Freedom Beyond Sovereignty: Reconstructing Liberal Individualism (2015). Therefore, the activism of Indo-Pak women in the freedom movement has been discussed as non-sovereign agency. The self-determination of progressive Muslim women remains non-sovereign as they do not forsake their religious, gender and national identities in the struggle for independence or a separate homeland in the colonial Subcontinent of 1930s and 40s. Both Sughra and Zohra discard purdah to achieve political radicalization but do not relinquish female dignity. Sughra conforms for getting married to her cousin Mansur as decided by her parents and Zohra wins their approval to marry her socialist love Ahmed, who does not belong to her class. The agency to challenge the dominant structures by actively participating in the politics of the times and rejecting the binaries like rich and poor, is achieved through the support of the family. Mohini, who is a Hindu, is a step ahead of Zohra and Sughra as she is a radical political activist who participates in demonstrations for Congress and gets imprisoned but does not get subdued. Mohini's failure in getting married to Habib and Sughra's return to her husband after the 1947 Partition indicate their non-sovereign agency. The study concludes that the choice of maintaining a balance between the religious, personal and professional life by these women is also the type of agency which Krause calls non-sovereign because their intentions and actions are in direct correlation with the circumstances and this intersubjectivity undermines the impact of their agency.

Keywords: Subcontinent, Partition, agency, non-sovereign agency, freedom-movement, intersubjectivity



Introduction

The political awakening of Muslim women seemed to be inextricably linked to the struggle for a separate Muslim state in India. (Willmer, 2008, p.573)

The paper celebrates women's agency by highlighting their activism and radical struggle for the freedom movement of the Subcontinent as presented in Mumtaz Shah Nawaz's (1912-1948) novel *The Heart Divided* (1957). The creation of Pakistan was a result of long political struggle not only for getting independence from British colonizers but also for being separated from Hindus of the Subcontinent for the attainment of oppression free cultural and religious practices. In this struggle, not only men participated wholeheartedly but Muslim women also turned out to be active contributors not bound by any obligation but as a matter of choice.

The Heart Divided is unique in the sense that it portrays pre-partition radical women unlike many other partition novels that present women only as victims of the Partition riots or patriarchal structures of the society in general and family in particular. Thus, the novel becomes a representative of female leaders like Fatima Jinnah, Jahanara Shahnawaz, Begum Salma Tassaduq Hussain, Shaista Ikramullah, Zari Sarfraz, and Lady Abdullah Haroon who actively participated in the struggle for a separate homeland for Muslims of Indian Subcontinent.

Mumtaz Shah Nawaz (1912–1948), a writer and political activist, belonged to an elite family. She had the honour of being the granddaughter of Sir Muhammad Shafi who was not only a founding member of All India Muslim League but also its chief proponent in Punjab. Her father Mian Shahnawaz and mother Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz were also Muslim League activists. Thus, the activism ran in her blood, but the best expression of that, from a female perspective, culminates in the novel, *The Heart Divided*. The novel was completed in 1948, her last year in this world, because she passed away in an air crash in the same year. The novel's first draft was published posthumously by her family in 1957 in its unedited form.

The Heart Divided represents those pre-partition women who actively and radically participated in the freedom and Pakistan movement. However, the main focus is on the evolution of Muslim women from domesticated simpletons to hybridized emancipated individuals who adapt according to the needs of their times. Shahnawaz herself was an emancipated woman, belonging to an elite class. She was not only a political activist with a refined taste for art and literature but also had a deep realization about the need of creating consciousness in the middle class women in India. She sketches the images of educated and politically active women who tried to stand by the side of their men and wallow in political activities.

Set in colonial India of 1930s and 40s, *The Heart Divided* delineates the perspective of an elite Muslim family, the Jamaluddins, in the making of Pakistan, with a particular focus on their two daughters, Sughra and Zohra. The characters epitomize the Muslim activists of those times who paved way for the genesis of Pakistan through individual and collective endeavours. They are convinced of the legitimacy of the

Muslim League and Pakistan gradually as the novel unleashes the various happenings paving way towards a shift in loyalties from Congress to Muslim League.

Literature Review

The novel does not have ample multidimensional critiques. However, the few commentaries available on, either encompass generalized feminist poetics to trace the role of women in the freedom struggle of Pakistan or resonate with the freedom struggle chronicle. For example, Alam (2020) encompasses the anti-colonial resistance propounded in the novel from a postcolonial perspective. He brings into discussion Zohra, Sughra and Mohini's resistance in the public sphere. He discusses unveiling as a symbol of female resistance against patriarchal structures and women's desire to subvert marriage which is presented as a trope of patriarchal tradition. Ahmed (2013) also considers the novel recounting the history of Pakistan through a feminization of discourse. Jajja (2012) also analyzes the novel from postcolonial and feminist perspectives with particular focus on the role of women. He concludes that the novel sophisticatedly represents the politics and history of the Subcontinent.

Siddiqui (2019) peruses the text from an androgynous perspective while defining androgynous as a combination of both male and female characteristics in an individual. She considers the external events acting as catalysts for women to pitch in freedom movement. She labels Shahnawaz a feminist who creates an androgynous discourse with the "dominance of feminist element" (Siddiqui, 2009, p.3). This is achieved through representing them as educated and emancipated, according to her. She considers traits like going out for demonstration with men in those times as masculine characteristics in the females while they retain their physiognomies. Although the feminist discourses in our times are pluriform, generally emphasizing all sorts of potentials of women, her study remains unique in using platonic concept of androgyny and addressing activism as a male trait.

A few comparative studies are also available on *The Heart Divided*. For example, Alam (2018) compares *The Heart Divided* with Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* in its documentation of national history. While studying history from a bipartite temporal and spatial perspective, he compares Sughra's sense of pride in her understanding of Muslim history of the Subcontinent beginning in 712 AD as a temporal dimension with Mir Nihal's association with Muslim history through the city of Delhi as a spatial dimension. Alam traces these characters' burgeoning anticolonial imagination based on the impact of temporal and spatial layers of history.

Mehmood (2019) while tracing the historical development of the empowerment of women identifies *The Heart Divided* as the first novel written by an educated Muslim woman as well as political activist that "adumbrates women experiences of partition and post partition as dispossessed and domesticated figures who are alienated from their religious and national freedom for which they eagerly struggle in pre-partition" (p. 116). Chaudhuri (2016) considers the novel a portrayal of the elite urban Muslim women's perceptions of cultural heritage and modernity of 1920s onwards colonial India

facing the changing scenario due to new developments. The novel is a historical and political narrative encompassing South Asian Muslims' struggle for Pakistan. It delves deep into the personal proclivities that led young Muslim women of upper class to participate in freedom movement of 1930s and 40s.

David Willmer (1996) evaluates *The Heart Divided* as an exceptional novel because of its intertwining of social discourse of modernity with nationalist ideals. The encompasses the modernity of freedom struggle times in a manner which is deficit in other historical narratives be they history or fiction. Saeed (2014) explores the novel as a Partition narrative that does not centre around the violence of the Partition. He delineates how the novel circumscribes the Muslim struggle for a separate homeland by moving away from Hindu-Muslim unity and Congress in favour of Muslim League.

None of the studies on *The Heart Divided* focus on the women emancipation, be it political or personal, with particular reference to the nature of power or agency they have. Therefore, this study bridges the gap by studying the nature of women's agency by applying the concept of non-sovereign agency on both personal and political lives of the main characters.

Research Questions

Based on the research gap the study aims to explore the answers to the following research question:

- RQ1.** Does participation in politics render agency to the female protagonists of the novel?
- RQ2.** What is the nature of agency that the main characters of the novel demonstrate?

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative research based on literary analysis of the novel *The Heart Divided*. Literary analysis of a text analyzes various aspects of the text i.e., social, cultural, thematic, biographic and stylistic based on some literary criticism or critical theory cannon. For this purpose, a theoretical framework is developed for in-depth analysis in a particular direction. For this study, non-sovereign agency by Sharon Krause has been used as a theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

This study traces the self-determination of progressive Muslim women based on their choice of active participation while not forsaking their religious, gender and national identity in the struggle for a separate homeland in the colonial Subcontinent of 1930s and 40s. Therefore, for this study, agency has been studied as a non-sovereign, intersubjective but potent concept as delineated by Sharon Krause's in her book *Freedom Beyond Sovereignty: Reconstructing Liberal Individualism* (2015). Before defining non-sovereign agency, she defines the concepts of freedom and agency, which are discussed below:

Freedom

Krause (2015) considers freedom those “enabling conditions” that make agency possible. These enabling conditions can have multiple forms making freedom reflect itself in pluriforms. It is important to grasp the association of freedom with agency to fully comprehend the concept of agency. Misconceptions about agency can make us misunderstand multiple forms of freedom. It is noteworthy that the characters in the novel are colonized by the British. Therefore, they do not have state freedom. However, the circumstances do render them with some “enabling conditions” to exercise their will or try to operationalize their choices.

Agency

Krause (2015) defines agency as “the affirmation of one’s subjective existence, or personal identity, through concrete action in the world. To be an agent is to have an impact on the world one can recognize as one’s own” (Krause, 2015, p. 4). Agency requires both the choice or willingness to act as well as the impact of one’s actions. Although one makes conscious choices of one’s actions and contexts, the impact is dependent on other people’s contingencies of interpretation or response. Therefore, agency becomes non-sovereign because it is “vulnerable to differential social standing among groups” (Krause, 2015, p. 38). Due to colonization, the characters in the novel do not have full agency. However, their will to assert their individuality is read from socio-political aspect.

Non-Sovereign Agency

For Krause, agency becomes non-sovereign because action is a deeply intersubjective and a “socially distributed phenomenon” (Krause, 2015, p. 4) because one can neither predict nor control the consequences of one’s actions. It is others’ responses that play an integral role in determining the quality of our agency. It is also non-sovereign because it is “materially distributed” (Krause, 2015, p. 21) and represented materially in ways that cannot be fully related to our intentions. Agency takes place out of unintentional acts as well as intentions sometimes do not have desired impact but both are expressions of our agency.

“To call human agency non-sovereign,” Krause contends, “is to say that the exercise of agency regularly comes apart from intentional choice and consistently eludes individual control” (Krause, 2015, p. 21). Other people become integral to one’s agency through intersubjective exchanges. However, she believes that in spite of the dependence of our actions on intersubjectivity, we can be free and responsible agents even if some aspects go beyond control. Recognizing the nature of our non-sovereign agency is necessary for identifying the conditions for exercising agency as well as diagnosing the ways in which it can be thwarted.

Analysis and Discussion

The Heart Divided, through the portrayal of the characters of Sughra and Zohra, traces the evolution of political consciousness amongst young Muslim women of the Subcontinent of 1930s and 40s. It is the socio-political context in the narrative that shapes the personal and political lives of the characters. This evolution is highly impacted by the historical peculiarities of their times. While Sughra envisages a political formation ensuring the safeguard of the underprivileged, Zohra posits for nothing less than independence for erasing inequality. Both sisters, however, foresee the inevitability of the creation of Pakistan for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. They inherit political cognizance from their father Sheikh Jamaluddin, who has been represented as the first young man from Punjab to study at Cambridge, implying the enlightened status of the family in those times. Like many successful Muslim League leaders, he gets a degree in Law which enables him to be earnest about the political conditions of his country. Although, the visit to England metamorphosed his choices for preferring the English lifestyle to the extent that he also falls in love with an English girl, his acquiescence to getting married to his cousin reflects his intersubjective choices. However, he requires his fiancé to learn English. Jamaluddin's life in this way reflects non-sovereign agency because in spite of his desire for English-like lifestyle, he does not annoy his father, upholds his traditions, eventually resolving the ambiguity by considering a deviation from traditions unnecessary.

Jamaluddin is an “incompletely hybridized character in whom the processes of transculturation are supplanted by the comforts of ‘home’ and the trappings of dynastic wealth” (Chaudhuri, 2016, p.57). Although over the years, he develops high esteem for his heritage and traditions, the cultural milieu he is embedded in makes his agency non-sovereign at one hand and colonial debasement on the other hand. Even elite and learned classes like Jamaluddin and his family are vulnerable due to colonial subjugation. The eight centuries of the glorious rule of the Muslims in the Subcontinent marked by their artistic taste and excellence in administration ends with the War of Independence in 1857. As the war was mostly executed by the Muslims, they faced the repercussions too. This decimation endangered Muslim traditions, therefore, the fear of civilizational erasure resulted in nurturing Muslim values. Although the Jamaluddin family descended from the Arab Sheiks and due to their glorious past they are the elite feudal even during colonization times, wherein their allegiance saves them from any direct persecution, they are imbricated in the systemic subjugation of the colonizers, slaves of the British who were unable to bring a change for themselves or their community. However, their ability to do something for their community reflects their agency though a non-sovereign one.

Before we discuss the characters' non-sovereign agency in detail, it is foregrounded that Habib, Sughra and Zohra and Mohini belong to elite families of Lahore. They gain agency based on their lineage, power, wealth and prominence. While in a colonized land, the colonized subjects' agency is thwarted, these characters' efforts for a separate homeland remain meaningful based on their status and render them some sort of agency which is studied as non-sovereign agency in this paper.

The development of political consciousness in the characters of Sughra, who is elder, and Zohra takes divergent paths. The novel begins by presenting Sughra as happily guiding maids and serving her father while Zohra as restlessly skimming newspaper, implying her interest in current affairs. While the former is home-oriented, the latter is politically ambitious. The act of discarding purdah by Zohra, in the very beginning of the novel, can be considered her first step towards non-sovereign agency. Although the situation necessitates it, she takes her first independent decision. She, while in a hurry to go out with her friends, forgets the upper top of her burqa home and, on the encouragement of her friend, Surraya, rides a tonga and visits shops without the top veil of burqa when her car breaks down. Her adventure begins as a stealthy act full of excitement. She wishes going to the Mall "with no cumbersome veil to hamper her" as "She would feel free as a bird" (Shahnawaz 1957, p.9). It becomes an act of non-sovereign agency because she has the intention for it as well as she executes it. Although the story reaches her parents in a distorted form: "...God knows where they went. And mind you, Zohra Bibi was without her Burqa" (Shahnawaz 1957, p.13), the parents after knowing the real story do not reprimand her. As her father tells her that she shouldn't have done it but they are safe as "no one recognized you" (Shahnawaz 1957, p.13), Zohra takes it foregranted to go shopping without veil from next time onwards. She has the will to exercise her agency with a fiery spirit towards emancipation, so she continues without veil to attend political gatherings too. However, she respects her family and the support of her father is great aid to her decisions. Zohra's evolution towards independent decision making and the agency to have her choices represent the women of her times metamorphosing into more independent and active political workers from domesticated veiled ladies restricted to the zenana or female portions of their houses to observe purdah from men. For example, her friend Surraya and the ladies of her family had already discarded purdah and that was an inspiration for Zohra. When they move from Nishat Manzil to their new and modern house, Zohra expresses her likeness of the new house because of the abolition of the segregation of the house into zenana (female) and mardana (male) portions.

Zohra is an emblem of systemic change in a society that is introduced to hybridity due to its interaction with the English and Hindus as well as through prevalent trends amongst upper classes for getting education from England. Zohra not only uses her non-sovereign agency to modify her feudal family's traditions through alternative gender ideologies like discarding purdah but also articulates the Muslim minority's need of a separate homeland. The novel begins with Zohra wondering how the change in her life began. This change transformed a veiled Muslim girl of noble heritage to an independent and adventurous radical spirit.

It was not easy to define when it began, for the lives of all the girls of her generation had changed so much and they were woven together in such a manner, like many-coloured threads of an intricate pattern, that it was difficult to decide when the change in

her particular life began. Perhaps it started on a quiet November evening in 1930 (Shahnawaz, 1957, p. 1).

Zohra is portrayed as an educated young Muslim woman who is deeply influenced by the politically charged environment of 1930s India. The above quote also shows that the change was taking place in the lives of many girls of her generation. Her times inculcated her with the cause of independence of Muslim women in a separate country of Muslims. As an emblem of change, she is representative of the women of her times not only on apparel level like the discarding of purdah but also on intellectual level through education and political choices.

One such choice is joining the nationalist cause of Congress. When she makes a speech in her college and the principal complains to her father, she asks her father why he discourages her from political participation while he himself is into it. Sheikh Jamaluddin tells her that he is not against her activism but against standing for Congress. He also tried to convey her same when Mohini visited their house to sell salt but she could not gauge it. Then he briefs her about their Muslim heritage and Muslims' need of a separate homeland. Thus her vision is shaped and redirected making her agency non-sovereign. Her intentions reflect her will to achieve something but the execution of her acts due to the influence of her family is directed in a peculiar direction i.e., struggle for the downtrodden and a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent.

However, Zohra does not discard her activism. She persuades her father for participating in intercollegiate debate competition and Habib, her brother, supports her for that: "Zohra must be a very good speaker....father, it's a pity to let the child's talent remain underdeveloped (Shahnawaz 1957, p.69)." He also refers to the growing women emancipation from those social taboos that hamper the progress of women. According to him, the times were changing for women as some of them "took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement last year, and a Muslim lady had gone to the round-table conference. I remember all the English papers praising her speeches last year. Our women must come out of Purdah now for we shall never make progress until they do" (Shahnawaz 1957, p.69). Cilano (2013) also finds indirect action inefficient and purdah-less activism in the forefront like that of Mohini more impactful. Overall, Zohra's agency remains non-sovereign because of the support she receives from her family. However, in making her choices she has the agency though not the freedom, for example, she persuades women to participate in politics instead of staying at home, in her speech.

The words of Habib represent active Muslim women like Mumtaz Shahnawaz herself, thus Zohra becomes her mouthpiece to reflect the transition in traditions. The political environment of those times was becoming increasingly conducive for women like Zohra who could emancipate themselves from their social pressures. Two particular aspects determine the emancipation of women of those times i.e., discarding purdah and participating in political gatherings with men, other than being educated and doing jobs. This Muslim women outlook was the part of a large-scale shift in the mindset of people. Zohra becomes a lecturer and labour-activist in Amritsar. Her political awakening

culminates when she joins League which broadens the horizon of her activism trajectory. She meets the socialist activist Ahmed who initially finds her a spoilt child. She chooses to marry him, although he is the son of her father's former clerk. Although, her family opposes this marriage in the beginning: "In Zohra's mind there was no conflict or confusion. She was determined to marry Ahmed" (Shahnawaz, 1957, p.474). Her agency exerts itself in her choice of leaving behind her elite feudal traditions of marrying to equals bridging rich-poor binary and she finds her parents objections baseless. However, she cares for them and is wishful that they would be fine with her decision once they see her happily settled. While she and Ahmed are confused about the execution of their marriage, Zohra's predicament is resolved by her father's consent and the support of her family in her marriage renders her agency non-sovereign.

While Zohra struggles to modify her Muslim family's vision, Mohini is confronted with the same sort of challenges from her family's side. Mohini, who is a Hindu, also belongs to an elite family, attempts to exert her agency through her radicalism, participating in demonstration, getting jailed and even within jail continuing the radicalism. She sends a letter to Zohra to get it published in the newspapers secretly and Zohra manages it with the help of Surraya. The letter is featured the next day and no one can even guess who managed its publication. Mohini also actively participates for selling salt on behalf of the Congress. However, her agency turns into non-sovereign when she is told by her grandfather to avoid court arrest. Although, her father and sister are already in jail, she continues taking part in demonstrations. Thus, she exerts her agency by defying the older generation in favour of new ideas. The real jolt to her agency is when both her and Habib's families refuse them to get married. Mohini's father considers marriage a social affair and social norms must not be challenged. At this stage even her non-sovereign agency is transformed into non-agency. Whereas Habib and Mohini have the agency to the extent of spending time together and sharing freedom ideals which eventually lead to their falling in love, the law as well as the society undermine their agency when it comes to getting married. The British law also did not facilitate inter-racial marriages except in special cases under some provisions. Mohini failed to trespass the religio-politic barriers that made such a union impossible. She was educated and well provided for but these privileges did not facilitate her to execute her marriage or implement her decisions. Therefore, her agency also remains non-sovereign because her will does not result in impactful actions.

Mohini's predicament also reflects the non-sovereign agency of the communities in their attempts to cement Hindu-Muslim unity as cleavage intensifies between inter-communal alliance inspite of the centuries' old adjacency of Hindus and Muslims. The novel imbricates love with political life especially through Mohini's choice to get married to Habib. She is an ardent representative of Hindu-Muslim unity like Congress by emphasizing upon breaking the boundaries between Hindus and Muslims who inhabited together for centuries but still do not mingle together because of their creeds: "...young people like us, must have the courage to break down such customs and traditions as come in the way of unity. ...must harmonize and pull together, if we are to gain

freedom” (Shahnawaz, 1957, p.177). This mirrors the younger generation’s progressive ideas as Zohra also considers the failure of Habib-Mohini romance a national tragedy. However, through this episode Shahnawaz equates fiction to history which did not salvage Hindu-Muslim unity. Mohini, consequently, cathectes pleurisy and convalesce in Kashmir, where her illness overshadows her agency and she overshadows her non-agency.

It was the political struggle and the common cause of freedom that rendered non-sovereign agency to women by making them an integral part of the political agenda. Sughra, who from the very beginning, amicably conforms to the little empowerment rendered by her family’s status and traditions gradually evolves her political consciousness when she encounters a few setbacks after her marriage. She herself wants to “live up to her ideals of Muslim womanhood: A dutiful daughter, a loving wife and a devoted mother” (Shahnawaz, 1957, p. 7). She conforms to get married to her arrogant cousin Mansur but her wedding makes her realize her non-agency. However, she exercises defiance by turning her face away from Mansur when he tries to approach her. Whereas she was independent in her father’s house for making many choices like managing home according to her will and going out with friends, she is unable to place her furniture in her in-laws house according to her inclination as Karima, her mother in law, exerts her agency over her. It is noteworthy how one woman’s agency turns other’s into non-agency. However, although she does not mess with her mother-in-law who restricts her to decorate her bedroom only with her dowry, she does not succumb to Mansur’s taste while decorating it. This reflects her non-sovereign agency. As the house is in no comparison to Nishat Manzil in its spaciousness and artistic taste, she finds herself suffocated in it. Her mother-in-law reprimands her wish to go out even for a breath of fresh air. She gradually nurtures dissatisfaction with domestic life. Thus Sughra represents the domination of patriarchal structures which she finally challenges after unmooring herself from Mansur.

Her helplessness in her in-laws house makes her envision the empowerment of Muslims and her frustration eventuates with the death of her young son from typhoid. This shock is gigantic enough to enable her to exert her agency to go back to her parents’ home and by initiating political struggle as a part of the Muslim League. While back to Lahore, she also explores the underprivileged areas in need of social work and takes a leap into that. Sughra can now see the squalor, suffering and sickness of the people in the slums of Lahore and she dedicates herself to the women in need under the Leagues banner. She, at this point, discards purdah. In all her galvanizing endeavours for praxis, she is supported by her family and that makes it a non-sovereign agency. However, she also develops strong preferences like Zohra, for example, she also learns to drive. Sughra’s agency in making a choice to love Kamal, a married Muslim League activist in Delhi, also becomes non-sovereign when she figures out no chances of getting married with him and makes a choice of reconciling with her husband.

Sughra’s return to her husband after the Partition reflects her non-sovereign choice of maintaining a balance between personal life and social activism, and reaffirms

her identity as a Muslim woman, a choice she never regrets later on. She looks out of window at the crescent moon and exclaims "the herald of Pakistan" (Shahnawaz, 1957, p.505) and "suddenly she knew what she must do and pulling out a suitcase from under the bed she began to pack" (Shahnawaz, 1957, p.505). Her reconciliation determines her intersubjectivity in Krause's terms which maintains a balance between social, religious, cultural and personal aspects. The novel ends with her and Mansur resolving to "go forward hand in hand" towards Pakistan (Shahnawaz, 1957, p.506).

Among the ideals and radical actions of the new generation, Mehrunnisa, the mother of Zohra and Sughra seems to be a foil, representing the older generation upholding traditions. Her life revolves around her husband and children. Whereas, she is upset on Habib's love for Mohini, Sughra's separation and Zohra's choice of Ahmed based on class and caste differences, her agency remains non-sovereign because she is convinced by her husband and children about the upcoming transitions taking place and as a result happily conforms to the new developments. Her old generation rooted in old traditions find themselves in transition because of the modernism entering into their houses. Thus the over-all environment influenced her to adapt to the new development and she accepts the discarding of purdah as well as out of class marriage of Zohra. Her flexibility and adaptability represent the mothers of the pre-independence era. Her acceptance of her daughters' choices further establishes her non-sovereign agency.

The elite Muslim and Hindu ladies were compelled by the allegiances of their families for coinciding with Muslim League or Congress that represented the political ideologies prevalent at the time. Thus participating in the struggle the family was engaged in, inspired women to have political ideologies too. Whereas the participation in politics emancipated the female protagonists to a great extent, the nature of their agency remains non-sovereign. Krause focuses on "interpersonal dynamics, cultural values, and social practices" (Krause, 2015, p. 11) and we find them dominant in the final choices of Zohra and Sughra. Although Mohini deviates from social barriers with a strong will, but the failure of the execution of her choices makes her agency non-sovereign too as Krause emphasizes upon the dependence of agency on other people's contingencies, interpretations and responses.

Research question one probed whether the participation in politics resulted in the emancipation of women through rendering agency to them. The study exhibits that the novel is a narrative of women's emancipation during political upheaval leading to birth of nations. The birth of nations also gives birth to new women who try to achieve independence for themselves on a physical as well as intellectual level. The second research question probed the nature of women agency. Cilano (2013) uses the term "conservative privilege" (p.26) for the protagonists' radicalism. According to her, the radicalization is because of the social and economic status of the family and that the novel represents gendered and political radicalization in a limited sense: "...the novel's vision ofidealized Muslim womanhood, stays put as if apolitical." (Cilano, 2013, p.33). Our study corroborates that almost all protagonists discussed above do not revolt

against their families or religions and uphold non-sovereign agency by imbricating their wishes with their families.

Conclusion

The study concludes that religious, personal and professional contingencies transform Sughra, Zohra and Mohini's agency into non-sovereign agency. Even for non-sovereign agency, the room is created by the dominant socio-political circumstances that not only enabled women to educate themselves, but also travel for jobs as well as political activism. This further paves way to discard purdah in case of Muslim women and select life partners by their own choices. However, the activism is encouraged by families and the socio-cultural and religious norms interact with the protagonists' choices in a manner to render their agency non-sovereign. The study also substantiates that although colonialism hampers the freedom of the communities and individuals, the anti-colonial struggle acted as a catalyst for women to exhibit non-sovereign agency.

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